JOHN BURT

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FREDERICK UPHAM ADAMS

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"That's a portrait of Miss Carden—Miss Jessie Carden of Boston," said Blake.

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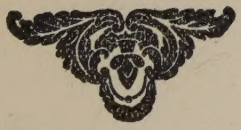
By FREDERICK UPHAM ADAMS

Author of "The Kidnapped Millionaires"
"Colonel Monroe's Doctrine"



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Dedicated to My Wife.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	The Prophet's Prayer,	9
II.	Jessie Carden,	14
III.	John Burt's Boyhood,	26
IV.	James Blake,	35
V.	The Runaway,	41
VI.	Summer Days,	50
VII.	Arthur Morris,	64
VIII.	Jealousy,	73
IX.	The Tragedy,	83
X.	The Parting,	93
XI.	Exiled,	103
XII.	Samuel Lemuel Rounds,	115
XIII.	Sam's New York Triumphs,	134
XIV.	Lost in the Snow,	144
XV.	The Sailor Mine,	156
XVI.	The Quest for Gold,	167
XVII.	The Capitalist,	175
XVIII.	Success and Failure,	186
XIX.	A Brilliant Campaign,	197
XX.	In Strict Confidence,	206
XXI.	Bad News,	221
XXII.	A Foreign Mission,	238
XXIII.	Diplomacy,	249
XXIV.	Two Strange Interviews,	267
XXV.	General Carden is Puzzled,	275
XXVI.	Breaking Old Ties,	288

CHAPTER		PAGE
XXVII.	Unreasoning Passion,	305
XXVIII.	Measuring Lances,	316
XXIX.	Alderman Rounds,	321
XXX.	On Thin Ice,	334
XXXI.	The Mantle of Charity,	347
XXXII.	Hawkins Makes a Discovery,	360
XXXIII.	Sam Rounds Repents,	375
XXXIV.	The Love of a Man for a Woman,	387
XXXV.	Edith's Confession,	400
XXXVI.	Tale of the Ticker,	405
XXXVII.	Father and Son,	420
XXXVIII.	Blake's Sacrifice,	426
XXXIX.	Through the Heart,	441
XL.	Shadow of Death,	449
XLI.	A Mendacious God,	454
XLII.	The End,	463

ILLUSTRATIONS

"That's a portrait of Miss Carden—Miss Jessie Carden of Boston," said Blake *Frontispiece*

The next instant a bearded face appeared from the folds of a heavy overcoat . . Facing page 149

With old school dignity General Carden presented James Blake - Facing page 291

Like a column pushed from its base he fell Facing page 448

John Burt

CHAPTER ONE :: THE PROPHET'S PRAYER

"KNEEL, John. Take off your hat, lad. Let us pray!"

An old man and a boy clung like wreckage to a rock which marked the outer edge of Black Reef. The flickering light of a lantern accentuated the gloom of the night; a night famous in the annals of New England for the storm which tore the coast from Quoddy Head to Siasconset. Darkness fell at three o'clock that murky November day, and the half gale from the south waned, only to gain strength for the blast which, at turn of the tide, roared in from the northeast.

Black Reef is a jagged spur of the rock-walled coast which holds the Atlantic at bay in the crescent sweep of beach and cliff from Nantasket to Cohasset. Forty years ago the scattered houses of a few farmers nestled among the hills well back from the beach.

The lantern's light revealed two figures worthy the pencil of a Hogarth. Bared to the gale, the old man's scant white locks streamed back from a forehead massive and unfurrowed. Wonderful eyes of steel gray glowed with fires of fanaticism beneath dark, shadowing eyebrows scarcely touched with the rime of years. The thin lips parted in a line which suggested implacable tenacity of pur-

pose, not halting at cruelty nor stopping at cunning. Above the mouth, the head was that of a Greek god; below it showed the civilized savage—selfish, relentless—the incarnation of courage, strength, and determination. The man's frame was so broad that the legs seemed stumpy, yet Peter Burt stood six feet four at three score years and ten.

His companion on this night mission to hurricane-swept Black Reef was a boy of eight. When he removed his cap at the old man's command, it released dark curls clustering over a high and well-formed brow. No fear of the storm or of the strange old man showed in the dark gray eyes of the youth. He was garbed in a tightly buttoned jacket and a pair of homespun trousers, securely tucked into copper-toed boots. The ends of a blue yarn "comforter" fluttered in the gale.

As the old man spoke, a wave dashed its icy spray across the rock.

"It's awful wet, granddad. Can't I stand up and pray?"

"Kneel, my boy, kneel," replied the old man in a deep but not unkind voice. "The Lord will not harm His servants whether they approach Him in storm or in calm."

Clinging to the projecting edge of the rock, young John Burt knelt at the edge of a pool left by the wave. Above the roar of the surf there came to his ears the notes of a distant village clock toll-

ing the hour of ten. To the east, Minot's Light glowed intermittently through the mist. Against the black of sea and sky it burned a halo for an instant, vanishing to make gloom all encompassing.

Twenty feet below, the surges of the Atlantic, impelled by the rising gale and tide, dashed against the rock with a fury unabated in a conflict which had endured for centuries. A stone's throw away a reef of low rock withstood the first impact of the waves. Through the darkness it showed a ridge of foam. The spindrift hurled landward by the wind was salt to the lips, and stinging as the lash of hail.

Falling on his knees, the old man faced the sea, raised his arms to heaven, and prayed to the God who rides on the wings of the storm. The spray stung his face, but he heeded it not. A giant surge swept the lantern away, and its faint light went out as it clattered along the rocks. The old man prayed fervently that his sins might be forgiven. There was one sin which weighed heavily upon him, though he named it not in his petition.

The year was 1860, and on that November day the news had come to Rocky Woods of Abraham Lincoln's election to the presidency.

Peter Burt belonged to no religious denomination. He interpreted the Scriptures according to the "light which was within him." He believed he had received a revelation from God, and that he was gifted with the spirit of prophecy. He made no effort to win converts to his faith. On the con-

trary, he cherished it close as a personal heritage. Sure of secret communion and partnership with God, he was jealous of his intimacy with the Almighty. On still, clear nights, from a lonely hill which served as an altar, the giant patriarch lifted up his voice as one praying in the wilderness. During the closing weeks of the Presidential campaign his addresses to the Almighty were logical declarations and arguments, presented as if to a reasonable but influential opponent. And now that Lincoln was elected, Peter Burt knelt before his God, humble and submissive as a sinner, but esteeming himself worthy to be treated as an equal in matters of State or nation.

In the tempest which lowered when the election was in doubt, and broke in fury when the triumph of Lincoln was certain, Peter Burt saw an augury of the storm which was soon to sweep the country. An ardent Abolitionist, and a rabid advocate of Unionism, he lifted his voice that November night in a frenzy of eloquence which thrilled the child at his side and left an impress years did not efface. Amid the crash of waters, with no gleam of light save the pulsing glare of Minot, his gray hair streaming in the wind, his dripping arms stretched over the foam, Peter Burt prophesied the four years of desolating war then impending. He invoked the curse of God on the enemies of his country, returned thanks for the coming emancipation of the slaves, and exulted in the glorious victory to be

achieved by the Union arms. He ended with a tender plea for the grandson kneeling beside him—"who is the heir," the old man declared, "not of my worldly possessions, which are nothing in Thine eyes, but of those gifts and that power of divination with which Thou hast graciously vouchsafed me. John Burt shall be the chosen one of the house of Burt. Withhold not, O Lord, Thy blessing from him! Amen."

The old man arose and shook the water from his hair. The boy clutched at him for support against the gale, now blowing with cyclonic force. The prophet was gone, the New England farmer stood in his place. The resonant voice which challenged wind and wave sounded harsh as he exclaimed:

"Where's the lantern, John? See if you can find it. We'll break our necks trying to get back without it."

John found the lantern, and after many attempts and muttered complaints the old man lighted it. Laboriously they picked their way along the slippery rocks until they came to a protected side of the ledge, where the water swung in an eddy but faintly disturbed by the thundering surf. Holding the lantern high over his head, the old man walked cautiously along until he reached the weed-strewn and surf-lashed beach. He looked into the face of the boy who trudged beside him.

"You are a brave lad, John; a brave, good lad. It is beginning to rain. We must hasten home."

CHAPTER TWO

JESSIE CARDEN

"I DON'T care to pick flowers! I want to stay right where I am. I hate those old yellow flowers; and besides, they're scratchy. Let me stay and watch for one of those thingumbobs in the water. Please, Govie!"

Jessie Carden clung firmly to an iron rod of the old bridge, and spoke with the pleading defiance of a spoiled child of twelve. The governess smiled sadly down upon the pouting lips and rebellious eyes. There was tender reproach in her look.

The clasp of the little hand on the iron rod relaxed, and a smile chased the pout from the pretty lips.

"I'm awful sorry; I didn't mean anything!" she exclaimed as she threw her arms around her companion. "You know I'm sorry, don't you, Govie? But please let me stay here while you pick flowers. I'll be awful careful."

"Certainly, my dear," replied Miss Malden as she smoothed her dark curls, tossed in charming confusion by an ocean breeze which tempered the heat of the August afternoon. "Don't lean out over the bridge, sweetheart, and keep away from the creek. I shall not be gone long, and I'll bring back a nice bouquet of flowers and grasses for the dinner table. You will be very careful, won't you, Jessie?"

"Just awful careful, Govie. There's one of those spidery things now!"

Miss Malden left Jessie in rapt contemplation of a hard-shelled crab which had ventured so near the bank of the creek as to render himself visible to the keen eyes of that very young lady. The governess took one anxious look as she entered the wood; saw Jessie toss a pebble in the direction of the crab, and heard her shout for joy as the crustacean moved clumsily sideways into deeper water.

Save for the fitful breeze which nodded the marsh grasses and fluttered the leaves of the chestnut trees, nature seemed asleep in the heat of the long summer afternoon. A few rods away the beach lay like a bar of tarnished brass, lapped by the languid surf of an outgoing tide. The sandy road stretched to the east until lost in a curve around a ridge of shrub-crowned rocks. Its ruts were softened in the quivering waves of heat which played above it. The monotonous tinkle of a cowbell, the occasional croak of an invisible frog, the drone of insects, and the murmur of the waves as they caressed the rocks and sands were the only sounds. The deep blue of the ocean faded at the horizon into the turquoise dome of a cloudless sky. It was midsummer in New England.

The dark waters of the creek mirrored a fair face, doubly youthful in its innocent beauty. The dark brown hair, the soft brown eyes, and the

parted lips gave promise of coming charms. The delicately molded nose was perfect, and when Jessie Carden smiled there were baby dimples in the sun-tanned cheeks. The girlish figure was graceful in the broken curves of spring; the limned outlines of a masterpiece, upon which the artist, Time, had just begun his work of love.

Jessie was spending her first summer in the country. For three weeks she had been living in the Bishop farm-house. So many things had happened that the memory of the Carden mansion in Boston had become a dream. The Bishops were distant relatives of General Marshall Carden, the banker; and to them had been consigned the welfare of his daughter, in special charge of a trusted governess.

Jessie peered over the rail and watched the waters in vain for another of the "thingumbobs." She ran back and forth and threw sticks and stones into the creek in a vain attempt to lure its denizens to the surface. Then she spied a hoop-pole which had fallen from a passing wagon. This slender rod easily reached the water, and Jessie threshed the surface with all possible vigor. A projecting branch from the pole caught her cap, and it fell into the creek, where the tide swept it under the bridge.

With a cry of dismay, Jessie turned and dashed across, almost falling beneath the feet of a horse.

"Whoa, Jim!"

Checked in a slow trot by a pair of taut lines, an old farm horse stopped so suddenly as to rattle the contents of the wagon. The driver, a boy of seventeen, dropped the lines and leaped lightly to the bridge.

"Did he hit you, little girl?"

Jessie Carden stumbled and fell just beyond the horse's hoofs. Before the boy could reach her, she was on her feet and peering over the bridge.

"There it is! There it is!" she exclaimed, dancing in excitement and dismay. "Oh, what will Govie say? Boy, get me my cap!"

The youth, startled at the imperious summons, followed her gaze and caught a glimpse of the cap as it was carried along by the tide. Looking up the road, he placed his fingers between his teeth and whistled shrilly. A large Newfoundland dog came towards him, leaping in huge bounds.

"Hey, Prince, go get it!" He pointed to the cap, now whirling in an eddy.

The dog braced himself with his front legs, and hesitated for a moment, whining, not in fear but in excitement. Next moment the water splashed in Jessie's face as Prince struck the surface. With lusty strokes he swam in the direction of the cap. His master vaulted the fence and followed along the creek.

Prince soon reached the cap, and, holding it well above the water, turned for the bank. The sides were steep and slippery, but the boy took firm

hold of the dog's collar, and after a struggle hauled him to solid ground. Prince dropped the cap, filling the air with spray as he shook himself, wagged his tail, and lolled his tongue in canine self-satisfaction. A moment later the arm of a sailor blouse was round the shaggy, wet neck, a tanned hand caressed the heaving sides, and a sweet voice cooed:

"You are the best and dearest and bravest old doggie in the world, and I love you!"

"Here is your cap," said the boy, as he held a much bedraggled piece of millinery gingerly at arm's length.

"Thank you boy!" said Jessie, smiling through tears which were welling in her eyes. With a little sigh of relief, she noted that the governess was not in sight. Jessie patted the dog on the head, and with a roguish glance addressed her unknown companion.

"It was the dog that did it, not you," she said with a laugh which showed that all her sorrows were chased away.

"What's his name?"

"Prince."

"What is your own name?" asked Jessie, with the direct frankness of twelve years.

"My name is Burt—John Burt."

"Bert is a first name," said Jessie, looking the boy in the eyes with an expression half of doubt and half of surprise. "I have a cousin named Bert—Bert Hancock."

"Mine's spelled B-u-r-t."

"My name is Jessie Carden," said the young lady as she crawled through the fence unassisted by her new acquaintance. The courtesy expected by a miss of twelve is the same as that extended by a lad of seventeen, so neither suffered in the other's estimation.

"What were you trying to do with that pole?" asked John as they reached the bridge.

"I was trying to stir up those spidery things down there in the water," replied Jessie, again grasping the pole, which had remained erect, fast in the sticky bottom of the creek.

"Spidery things?" laughed the boy. "Do you mean crabs? Do they go like this?" John placed his hands together and wriggled his fingers in accurate imitation of an active crab.

"Yes, that's the way they go!" declared Jessie. "Oh, how I wish I could catch one!"

"That's easy," said John Burt as he climbed into the wagon. "Wait until I hitch this horse, and I'll show you how. Want some anyhow; you can watch me."

John Burt speedily returned with some scraps of meat and a mysterious implement which consisted of a pole with a stout dip net at the end of it. Jessie regarded the preparations with keen interest. Prince found a shady place beneath an oak girder, and went sound asleep. The boy took a piece of string from his pocket and securely fast-

ened a piece of tough raw beef to it; then he lowered the meat into the water. In his left hand he held the pole, with the meshes of the dip net but a few inches above the surface. Jessie watched with bated breath and wide opened eyes.

"Can I talk?" she whispered.

"Sure," responded John. "Nothing scares a crab much. I've got a bite! Stand back!"

Jessie had crowded so close to the fisherman that he had no room to manipulate the net. She jumped to one side, but did not take her eyes off the water. Slowly and carefully John raised the string. At last the meat showed red in the murky water of the creek. As it came to the surface John thrust the net below. Out of the swirl of water it emerged, laden with the meat and a struggling, writhing crab.

"Got him!" said John, as he lifted the dripping collection over the side of the bridge.

Jessie screamed with delight. Prince awoke, trotted across the bridge, and surveyed the crab with much dignity; then returned with a look of disgust that so ordinary an event had created so great a furor.

"Isn't he ugly! Look at his legs! One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven —no, ten—I counted one of them twice. Does he bite?" Jessie hovered over the net and stretched her fingers towards the floundering crab. The little beady eyes glittered, the claws clashed helplessly.

"You bet he can bite! You get near enough and he'll nip you good and hard," said John as he unsnarled the crab from the twine and meat. "Run over to the wagon and get the basket. I forgot it."

Delighted to be of assistance in so famous an undertaking, Jessie ran swiftly to the wagon, and returned with a large wicker basket. John had already dropped the bait in the water, and the crab was crawling around the bridge. Reaching down, he deftly grabbed the crab and dropped him into the basket.

For an instant Jessie was speechless with wonder and admiration at such bravery.

"He didn't bite you?"

"Of course not. I didn't let him. You must grab them back of the neck. Here, look out! I've got another!"

There was a swish of water and a second crab ended his aqueous career, joining his companion in the basket.

"They're crawling out!" exclaimed Jessie. "One of 'em's on the edge! Stop him, quick!"

John shook the basket and the crab fell to the bottom.

"I'll tell you what to do," directed John. "Go and get a stick, and when they try to crawl up, poke 'em back!"

Jessie found a short stick, and for ten minutes "poked 'em back." The colony steadily increased,

and the joy of keeping them in the basket began to pall. Jessie looked wistfully at her companion.

"Boy, let me catch and you poke," she ventured in a plaintive note. "I never caught a crab. Won't you please—John Burt?"

"Why, certainly!" said John. "I'll show you how."

Jessie left the squirming mass of crabs and sprang to John's side. Her face was aglow with the thrill of a new experience. Her hand trembled as she grasped the wet, slippery pole, but determination showed in every feature.

"Reach down as far as you can," John directed. "That's right. Now hold the pole in your other hand like that. You're doing fine. When you feel something pull or jerk, pull up—slowly, though, or you'll scare him. Do you feel anything?"

"The line kind of twitches," whispered Jessie.

"Raise it up slow. Be careful. There's one on, sure! Now jam the net under him!"

Jessie made a swing with the net, but dipped too low. A huge crab dropped from the meat, struck the edge of the net, and floundered back into the water.

"I lost him! What a shame! Wasn't he big?"

"Go on; try again," said John good naturedly.

Jessie lowered the meat and waited patiently for a minute. Then she slowly raised the line. With much care she dropped the net below the meat and raised it from the water.

"I've got one! I've got one! Take it quick, or he'll get away! There's two of 'em—two of 'em!"

Jessie clapped her hands and danced with delight. John grinned in sympathy as he shook two crabs from the net. Prince growled. John looked up the road.

"There's some one coming," he said.

Jessie turned and saw Miss Malden approaching. In an instant the many transgressions of which she was guilty passed through her mind. She looked at her muddy feet, her bedraggled hat, and her splattered blouse and skirt.

"I'll get an awful scolding," she said, half to herself and half to the boy. Then for the first time she scrutinized John Burt. She noted that he was well dressed; that he was not barefooted, like most farmer boys; and that he was handsome and self-possessed.

"Do you belong to the riffraff?" asked Jessie, lowering her voice so that the approaching governess should not hear her.

"The what?" asked John Burt.

"The riffraff," repeated Jessie.

"Never heard of it," replied John Burt with a puzzled smile. "What is it?"

"I don't know," said Jessie; "but my papa don't allow me to associate with the riffraff, and I forgot until just now to ask you if you are a riffraff."

A look of pain came to the honest face of the boy. Before he could speak Jessie turned to meet Miss Malden.

"Why, Jessie Carden, what have you been doing?" With a cry of dismay the governess dropped an armful of flowers and surveyed the wreck of the sailor suit. "Look at your shoes, Jessie, and your new cap, and your lovely dress! What will your auntie say? Oh, Jessie, how could you do such a thing?"

Jessie looked penitent indeed as she gazed at the muddy shoes and the torn stocking; but contrition is a feeble flame in the heart of a child.

"Never mind the old clothes, Govie," she said, raising a face radiant in smiles at the thought of the fun she had enjoyed. "Watch me catch a crab! I can do it just splendid!"

"Jessie, lay that pole down and come away with me," said Miss Malden sternly. "How dare you play with a strange boy! What would your father say? Come with me at once!"

"He isn't riffraff, Govie!" said Jessie, with a look at the boy which gladdened his heart and took away the sting of her innocent words. "He is John Burt, and he and Prince saved my cap when it fell into the water. I asked him how to catch crabs and he showed me, and I caught two at once, didn't I, John Burt?"

Thus appealed to, John Burt bowed to Miss Malden and answered in the affirmative. Miss

Malden looked at him with all the severity of her gentle nature, though she knew that he was not to blame for the condition of her charge. She gathered up the flowers and took Jessie by the hand.

"Good-bye, Prince! Good-bye, John Burt!" Jessie waved her hand gaily at her fishing companion as Miss Malden turned into the path leading through the woods.

"He was real nice, and you're awful good, Govie, not to scold him!" were the words that reached John Burt as he carried his basket of crabs to the wagon.

CHAPTER THREE

JOHN BURT'S BOYHOOD

FOR two hundred years the Burt house had withstood the blasts of winter and the withering heat of summer. Time had worked upon the rough exterior until it seemed like a huge rectangular rock, weather worn and storm beaten. The small plateau on which it stood sloped northward to the sea. Rugged rocks to the west stood as a wall, frowning at the quiet beauties of salt marsh and cedar swamp below. To the south were patches of meadow wrested from wood and rock by generations of toil. Through this fairer section a brook wandered between banks festooned with watercress. Old settlers knew the locality by the name of Rocky Woods.

The convulsion of nature which raised this rugged coast as an eternal challenge to the Atlantic, exhausted its strength in the upheaval of a crag which reached its height a few hundred yards southwest of the old farmhouse. Black at the base with the gloom of fir and pine, its summit was bare in primeval rocks. For generations the dismal crest was called Burt's Hill, and in the time of this narrative, Burt's Pulpit.

At the base of its slope, and bordering the road, a square of perhaps a hundred feet had been hewn from the forest. Within this stone-walled area, blackened slabs of slate stood as sentinels above the ashes of eight generations of the house

of Burt. Some slabs had fallen, others leaned—weary of their sad task in the long flight of years. Here and there, over newly-made mounds, the white of a marble or the mottled blue of a granite seemed garish in comparison with flaked and crumbled slates, the crude letters on which were lost or blurred—pitifully eloquent in their voiceless testimony of the mutability of the works of man. The inclosing woods, as if anxious to efface the last memento which linked the past to the present, steadily encroached on the sleeping place of these pioneers. The overhanging boughs and the creeping vines seemed a repressed vegetal flood, eager to overleap the barrier which for two centuries had held it from its ancient own.

When Hezekiah Burt died, Peter Burt inherited the hold homestead in Rocky Woods. He was a young giant with the shoulders of a Hercules. His feats of strength are legends which yet pass from father to son in this part of New England. At the age of thirty he took to wife the fairest maiden of the surrounding country, and to them a son was born and christened Robert Burns Burt. A year later the mother sickened and died. The grief of Peter Burt was terrible as his strength. For a year he remained a prisoner in his house; then returned to work, and for two years labored with the energy of a demon. His second marriage followed. He led to the altar the daughter of a poor farmer, and of this prosaic union seven children were born.

After fifteen years of work and sorrow the patient wife folded her tired hands, closed her weary eyes, and sank into that sleep which awakens not to toil. If Peter Burt loved his second wife, he never told her so. If he loved her children, his expression of affection took a peculiar form. He made no secret of his favoritism for Robert Burns Burt, the only child of his first wife.

Robert was a boy of whom any father would be proud. At twelve he was sent to school in Hingham. At nineteen he entered Harvard, graduating in four years with honors. After two more years devoted to a law course, he began practice in Boston, and his success was instantaneous.

His visits to Rocky Woods were events not to be forgotten by his half-brothers and sisters. When Robert came the father was another being. The harsh note left his voice, his eyes were soft and loving, and he spoke kind words to the children. The table was heaped with all the delicacies that Hingham afforded; work was suspended for the day, and in the evening Peter Burt climbed to the dusty attic and brought back an old violin. With the flickering glare of an open fire lighting up his strong face, he sang the love songs of his youth; and at times a quaver came into his voice, and through the shadows tears glistened on his cheeks.

Then Robert would play and sing—a college song, perhaps, or a fragment from some opera.

Those were sweet but rare events in the old farmhouse beneath the shadow of Burt's Hill.

For ten years after the death of his wife, Peter Burt conducted the farm of his forefathers. One after another of his sons and daughters, as they became of age, left the old home, never to return. One night after supper Peter Burt informed the remaining children that he was going to sea. He had bought an interest in a whaling vessel, and would sail from New Bedford in a week. To Sarah —the eldest of the children—he gave three hundred dollars, together with instructions concerning the management of the farm. He did not know how long he would be gone—it might be a year or it might be five. With some tenderness he kissed the weeping orphans, and tramped down the road in the direction of Hingham,

Peter Burt was fifty-six years old when he sailed from New Bedford harbor as captain of the whaling ship Segregansett. Robert alone, of all his children, stood on the pier when the ship weighed anchor and stood out to sea. With tears coursing down his cheeks, the father bade the young man good-bye and gave him his blessing.

Five years later the Segregansett dropped anchor at New Bedford. None of the crew that went out with her returned. Peter Burt sold the cargo, paid off his men, disposed of his interest in the ship, and on the following day walked into the Burt farmhouse. He was greeted affectionately by

his son Joseph, who for a year had lived alone in the old house. A week later the boy was sent to school in Boston, and Peter Burt began his solitary occupancy of the ancestral home.

Shortly before Peter Burt's return, Robert had married, and the old man was delighted when the young couple made a visit to the old farm. The following year John Burt was born, and Peter Burt, journeyed to Boston to witness the christening.

Two years later Robert Burns Burt and his wife were instantly killed in a railroad accident. The train crashed through a bridge. It was winter, and bitterly cold. Of the fifteen passengers in the car occupied by Robert Burt, but one escaped. A child, two years old, was found warmly wrapped in its traveling blanket, uninjured, on a cake of ice, a few minutes after the car plunged beneath the water. It was John Burt.

In the opinion of his neighbors, Peter Burt was crazy from the hour the news came to him. Strange stories were whispered concerning Captain Burt, as he was then called. Belated travelers along the lonely road saw lights burning through all hours of the night. They heard the old man talking or praying in a loud voice.

On two occasions Dr. Randall, returning from nocturnal calls, drove past the Burt house long after midnight. Once he saw Captain Burt walking slowly up and down in front of his house. The night was intensely cold, but the old man was bare-

headed, his hair shining like snow in the moonlight. His hands were raised. He was beseeching pardon for some great sin. Dr. Randall spoke to him, but in a voice of thunder Captain Burt ordered him to drive on. On the second occasion, the doctor heard the voice of the recluse from the top of the great rock, and through the trees caught a glimpse of his giant figure dim against a starlit sky.

A sailor who came from New Bedford to Hingham told grim stories of Captain Burt. From the tales of this drunken mariner, the impression grew that Captain Burt was the most merciless man that ever trod a deck. The stranger insinuated that there was one story of crime which would astound all hearers; but though garrulous when in his cups, he seemed held in a spell of fear, and could not be induced to reveal it.

Upon the death of Robert, Peter Burt went to Boston and buried his dead. With tearless eyes he saw the pride of his old age lowered into the grave. Robert Burns Burt was a careful lawyer, and his will covered every contingency. It appointed his father executor of his small estate, and intrusted him with the care of his son. Peter Burt placed the boy in the keeping of a competent nurse, and returned to his farm.

Save for the occasional smoke from the chimney, there was no sign that Peter Burt existed throughout the three months that followed. His son Joseph called at the house, but was not admitted.

At the end of this period the old man emerged and was seen in Hingham. For the first time in years he spoke to his neighbors, who noticed that his hair was as driven snow, and that his face shone with a strange light. In the calm manner of one controlled by an unalterable conviction, he stated that he had made his peace with God, and was inspired by Him. He had received the gift of prophecy and of understanding.

His language was figurative, and he talked in parables; but his predictions were plainly stated, and, to the wonderment of those who heard them, they were invariably accurate. He foretold the weather for coming seasons, the condition of the crops, the death of famous characters, the result of elections, and described in advance the successive political moves which were then leading up to the conflict between North and South.

When John Burt was seven years old, his grandfather brought him to the old farmhouse. With the boy came his nurse and her husband, William Jasper, the latter charged with the duties of hired man. Thus John Burt began his life on the farm.

Those old folks who remembered Peter Burt in his childhood saw in John his living image; the boy's features being softened, though not weakened, by the gentle beauty of his mother and paternal grandmother. The child had no fear of the old man, who for a generation had inspired

terror or awe in all about him. Far from feeling aversion, he was fond of the aged recluse and fanatic. It was strange and almost uncanny to witness this ill-assorted companionship. The neighbors learned, however, from William Jasper that Peter Burt became perfectly rational in his talk with the child.

He permitted and encouraged John to become acquainted with the few boys of his age in the neighborhood, though he sternly denied them entrance to his house.

With infinite patience Peter Burt explained to the boy such natural phenomena as his young mind was able to comprehend. The sprouting of grain; the slow unfolding of a plant; the growth and bursting of a bud; the creeping of a vine; the flowing of a brook; the falling of the rain; the changing of the seasons—these and hundreds of other things which puzzle a boy were made clear by Peter Burt. John learned the names of grasses, of flowers, shrubs, trees, vines, and weeds; of birds, insects, and the inhabitants of wood and field. On his eighth birthday he began the study of the alphabet. At that time he knew more of the physical world in which he lived than do many professors of learning.

When John had mastered his letters and primer he was sent to school in Hingham, taking the regular course for five years. Then a private tutor came from Boston. Five days in the week

the boy studied under this young man's direction, and made rapid progress. With his stern old face lighted with joy and pride, Peter Burt would listen to the recitations.

CHAPTER FOUR

JAMES BLAKE

JOHN BURT was fourteen years old when he first met James Blake. The elder Blake had purchased the old Leonard farm, and so had become the nearest neighbor of Peter Burt. There were several children in the Blake family, but this narrative has concern only with James, the eldest, a boy of John Burt's age.

The two farms were separated by a creek, which, at a place called the Willows, widened to a pool, famed as a fishing and swimming place. One June morning John was seated on a log spanning the narrow neck of this reach of water. He had landed a bass, when the cracking of twigs and the swaying of the underbrush on the farther side of the creek attracted his attention.

A moment later a boy emerged from the thicket. He surveyed John with an expression more of contempt than of surprise. The new comer was a tall, well-formed lad, straight as an arrow, quick and graceful in his movements. He also carried a rod, which he rested against the log; and for a few seconds he calmly gazed at John Burt.

"Hello!"

"Hello!" answered John Burt.

"Fishin'?"

"No; swimming," replied John.

"Think you're smart, don't ye?" responded

the strange boy as he baited his hook. "Crazy Burt's boy, ain't ye? No objection to my fishin', have you?"

There was a taunting sarcasm in his voice, and defiance in his air. Without waiting for reply he cast his line into the water.

"You can fish as long as you please on your own side of the creek," said John sullenly. As he spoke a two-pound bass struck viciously, and for the next two minutes he was busy. With perfect skill he wore the fish down and landed him. Jim Blake watched him, but for half an hour no word was spoken. John caught four bass during that time, while Jim hooked only eel grass. Then he cast his line across the pool, dropping it a few feet from John's line.

John Burt's face flushed angrily.

"Keep on your own side!" he commanded.

"I'll fish where I darn please! This isn't your creek!" retorted Jim Blake with a defiant grin. "If it is, what are ye going to do about it?"

As he spoke John brought his hook near the surface, and by a sudden twist "snagged" Jim Blake's line. With a jerk he whipped the rod from his opponent's hand. Young Blake was furious. John calmly towed the rod across the pool, unsnarled the lines, and threw the rod on the bank.

Obeying a boy's first instinct, Jim looked for a stone, but found none. Then he jumped for the log. Dropping his rod, John Burt also sprang for-

ward, and they met in the centre of the bridge. Jim aimed a blow at John's head, which was parried. John swung to the chin, and the next instant Jim clenched and both fell eight feet into the water.

The pool was deep, and it seemed to Jim as if they never would come to the surface. When he did, and had gasped for breath, a pair of strong hands gripped his neck and he went down again. The water sang in his ears, the world grew black, and a roar as of a hundred cataracts thundered around him. Then it suddenly became light. The cool and splendid air filled his nostrils, and a voice sounded in his ears:

"Say 'enough,' or down you go again!"

"E-nough! E-e-e-nough! I'll quit" spluttered Jim Blake, throwing his arms about wildly.

With one hand firmly gripping Jim Blake's collar John Burt swam ashore with the other. It was ten minutes before Blake recovered his breath. With it he regained his courage. John had resumed fishing.

"You had the best of me in the water, and I cried quits," he said, springing to his feet, "but I can lick you on land. Come on; I dare you! Take a dare—steal a sheep! There's a chip—knock it off!"

Jim Blake placed a twig on his shoulder and threw himself on guard.

"No, I won't fight you to-day," said John Burt calmly. "You're in no shape to fight. Your name's

Blake, isn't it? Well, I'll fight you on either side of the creek to-morrow."

"I'll be here at nine to-morrow!"

"All right; we'll have it out;" and John went on fishing.

Jim gathered up his rod, recrossed the log, and disappeared in the brush.

John Burt was not quite as heavy as Jim Blake, and was six months younger. He had not been in Hingham school a week when he was the acknowledged commander-in-chief of the two score or more boys of about his own age. The result was attained by physical force, and by the natural law decreeing that some shall lead and others follow. Peter Burt had no religious scruples against fighting, and quoted the Bible to uphold his views. He taught John many tricks of boxing and wrestling, and was proud of the boy's strength and skill.

The two boys met the following morning, and wasted little time in preliminaries.

"Are you ready?" asked Jim.

"Yes."

And the next moment they went at it.

Jim fought with fury and much skill, but was no match for the clear headed, alert, and wiry lad who confronted him. It was a "stand up" battle, no blows being struck when either was down. Had a referee been present he would have stopped the fight at the end of the first minute and awarded it to John. As it was, fifteen minutes elapsed be-

fore Jim Blake went down and out from a cleanly delivered blow on the point of the chin. One eye was closed, his nose was bleeding, and his breath completely exhausted.

Together they staggered down the bank to the creek, washed the blood from their faces, and bathed their swelling bruises.

"I thought you was a country Jake, and couldn't fight," half sobbed Jim Blake, pulling at a sprained thumb. "I was never licked before." There was a gleam of pride through the tear in his uninjured eye.

"I was born in Boston, but I guess I am a country Jake," conceded John. "Say, I like you —shake!"

Jim extended a willing arm, and they shook hands with the gravity of trained pugilists.

A week later John met Jim and was told of a flogging he had received from his father, who was notorious as the village drunkard.

Thereupon developed in John Burt and James Blake that strong friendship so frequent between boys of contrasting natures. They seemed to have only two traits in common—both were frank and both generous. By nature and by reason of his grandfather's training, John was analytical, and arrived at his conclusions logically. Jim Blake jumped at deductions, and was generally wrong. He acted first and thought afterwards. John was methodical; Jim was careless.

James Blake was neither stupid nor dull. He was bright as he was handsome, and a better favored lad never gladdened a mother's heart, but he lacked that indefinable trait which is variously termed judgment, tact, or intuition. John Burt combined all of these gifts, but loved the adventurous spirit of his companion.

When Jim Blake was seventeen years old, he decided to run away from home. The two boys talked it over many times. To the scanty hoard in Jim's possession John Burt added thirty-five dollars—all the money he had saved from sums given him at various times by Peter Burt. So, with forty odd dollars in his pocket, and with tears in his handsome eyes, Jim Blake shook hands with John Burt and went out into the world to seek his fortune.

Little did these two boys think, as they parted that October afternoon, that their acts and passions and lives would one day be woven by fate into a web of marvelous workmanship.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE RUNAWAY

THREE years elapsed before Jessie Carden returned to the Bishop farm. John Burt was now twenty years old, and had successfully passed the examination which admitted him to Harvard. General Carden came with Jessie, delighted with the prospect of a week's rest in the old house. Miss Jessie, no longer a child, but a young lady with the impressive dignity of fifteen summers, was to spend the season with the Bishops.

General Carden was an enthusiastic horseman. Jessie was still unpacking her trunks when her father sent word that the carriage was ready, and that she was to drive with him. A few minutes later they were speeding down the old beach road. The spirited bays had not been exercised for several days, and for a time the general found it difficult to control them. They drove for miles along the winding, shaded roads. The breeze came cool and salt from the ocean, and the air was fragrant with the breath of summer.

"Here is where the crazy man lives," said Jessie, as they passed the old grave-yard, "and there is the rock from which he prays at night. When it is still we can hear him at our house."

A bit of the harness had become unbuckled. Handing the reins to Jessie, General Carden stepped to the ground to adjust it. The twelve mile drive had "taken the edge" off the horses, as

he expressed it, and he had them under perfect control.

His feet had hardly touched the ground when a prowling hunter, a few rods away, discharged a gun. The report was terrifying, and the affrighted horses leaped ahead. Jessie was thrown violently backward, the lines slipping from her hands. General Carden sprang for the horses' heads—an instant too late. He caught one glimpse of his daughter's white face as she swept past him. The agony of years was compressed into the succeeding moments.

The frenzied team dashed down the steep grade at appalling speed. At the base of the hill, and almost in front of the Burt farmhouse, was a sharp curve. Then the road skirted the cliffs for a quarter of a mile. Beyond lay a crooked hill, lined with ragged rocks—the most dangerous slope for miles around."

The carriage swayed as the horses thundered madly forward. Paralyzed by a fear which drove the blood from his cheeks, the brave old soldier, who had never faltered on a score of battle-fields, stood helpless and trembling.

Through the cloud of dust he saw the team as it passed the old house. A few rods beyond, a man lightly vaulted a fence and darted towards the road. General Carden's eyes were blurred, but he saw a flash of blue and white, as if something had been hurled in front of the maddened team. It

clung to the head of the off horse, and was tossed back and forth by the frantic animal. For an instant the figure seemed beneath the hammering hoofs. Could any human being hold fast in such a position?

At the turn in the road the general distinctly saw a man clinging to the horses' bits, bruised by the swaying pole—a pigmy who dared check the flight of giants. They swerved sharply at the curve. The off horse stumbled, lurched sideways, and fell. There was a crash; the sickening sound of splintered wood and clanking steel; then a silence, as the dust lifted and revealed the jagged outlines of a mass of wreckage.

As General Carden neared the fateful spot, he saw an old man run from the Burt yard and plunge into the wreck. A moment later he saw something in the rescuer's hands. A crumpled blue hat above dark curls showed plain in contrast to the white hair of the aged giant, who handled the little figure as if it were a feather, laid it gently by the side of the road, and again darted into the twisted mass.

General Carden breathed a silent prayer. He was a few rods away when Jessie moved slightly, lifted her head, and sprang to her feet. She stood for a moment, dazed and wavering; then her eyes rested on her father.

"I'm not hurt, papa!" she exclaimed bravely. "I am not hurt a bit. Oh, what has happened?"

"Thank God! Thank God!" He caught Jessie in his arms, gazed fondly into her eyes, and tenderly embraced her.

"Come and help me, sir! Is he dead? Oh, is he dead?" The loud, harsh command of the old man ended in a moan, pitiful in its anxious misery.

General Carden turned to the aid of Peter Burt. Tangled in the harness, a horse was plunging and struggling in an attempt to regain his feet. The other horse was dead, and beneath his shoulder was pinioned the leg of a young man. Blood was trickling down his face, and he lay in the dust of the road, limp and death-like. His right hand still grasped the bit; his head was near the hoofs of the frantic animal.

"Hold that horse's head down!" ordered the old man. General Carden threw his weight on the beast's neck. Jessie was hovering near, wringing her hands in pity and excitement. The old man looked towards the house and shouted Jasper's name, but the hired man was not in sight. Then his eyes fell on Jessie.

"When I lift that horse will you drag my boy's leg from under?"

"Yes, sir; oh, hurry sir!"

Crouching down, Peter Burt threw the head of the dead animal across his shoulder. He grasped the trace with one hand and the foreleg with the other. In his prime he had raised twelve hundred pounds, dead weight. The muscles of his neck

stood out like whipcords. With a heave of his massive shoulders he raised the forward part of the horse clear from the ground, and Jessie quickly released the pinioned limb of the motionless young man.

The old man gathered the body in his arms, and carried it to a grass plot by the side of the road. He rested his gray head for a moment on the young man's chest, and heard the faint flutter of the heart. In accents which thrilled Jessie Carden he exclaimed:

"He lives! He lives! Praise God, my boy is not dead!"

At that moment Jasper appeared and was despatched for Dr. Randall. General Carden cut the traces, and the uninjured horse regained his feet. Mrs. Jasper brought a basin of water, and when General Carden joined the silent group Jessie was washing the dust and blood from the white face and smoothing back the curling locks.

"Why, it's John Burt! It's John Burt, papa!" she exclaimed, tears starting to her beautiful eyes. "Will he die, Mr. Burt? Will he die? Oh, papa, is there nothing we can do?"

"He will not die, my child," said the old man in a clear, calm voice. "It is written that he shall live these many years."

As he spoke John Burt moaned slightly, as one troubled in his sleep, and his eyelids fluttered. He opened his eyes and gazed at Jessie Carden. He

passed his hand over his forehead, sighed gently, and closed his eyes as in slumber. They carried him to the old farmhouse.

Just as Dr. Randall arrived, John again regained consciousness and begged a glass of water. Jessie and her father waited anxiously in the sitting-room for the physician's verdict. The old man appeared first, and though he spoke not, his radiant face told the story.

"He is badly cut and bruised in several places, but no bones are broken," said Dr. Randall. Jessie clapped her hands for joy. "He was stunned by the fall and shock, but he has youth, health and a magnificent physique. He will be up and about in a week."

"Where is Mr. Burt?" asked General Carden. A search was made for the strange old man, but he could not be found. Had they gone to the great rock, they would have found the patriarch in thankful communion with his Maker.

They waited an hour or more, and then the general said to Dr. Randall:

"When the young man has sufficiently recovered, please give him the thanks of General Carden and his daughter for his heroic conduct, and say to him that we shall call and express our gratitude at the earliest possible moment."

Jasper was ready with the Burt family carriage; and, leaving a kindly message for the grandsire, they returned to the Bishop house. Jessie found

that she had a few bruises, but she laughed at her aches, and talked only of the heroism of brave John Burt. The next day she sent him a beautiful bunch of roses, and another each succeeding day until word came from Dr. Randall that the young man was able to sit up and might receive visitors. They drove to the farmhouse and were ushered into the library—John's study-room for seven years.

He was propped up in an easy chair, with the old man beside him. As the general and Jessie entered, John attempted to rise, but Peter Burt restrained him.

"That's right, Mr. Burt," said General Carden, as he advanced and grasped John's hand. "These young men do not like to obey doctor's orders, but they must do so. My boy, God bless you! I do not know how to thank you. Jessie, have you nothing to say to the young man who saved your life?"

"I never thought," said Jessie, placing her hands in his, "that the boy who taught me how to catch crabs would one day save my life. But you know I always told Miss Malden that you weren't riffraff, and you see I was right!"

John looked handsome as he lay back in the great arm-chair. The slight pallor served to accentuate those wonderful eyes—calm, reflective, and at times dreamy in mazes of thought and introspection.

"I'm glad I had a chance to be of service to one I had met before," he said, as Jessie took a seat beside him; "though I confess I should not

recognize you as the little girl who visited here several years ago. You are a young lady now, and I should hardly dare address you as Jessie, and that's the only name I knew you by in those days."

"I am not yet sixteen, and you can call me Jessie until I tell you not to. Can't he, papa?"

"I suppose so," said General Carden. "She is a spoiled child, Mr. Burt," turning to the old gentleman, "and I have ceased making rules, lest she should break them."

"The Book says that children should obey their parents," said Peter Burt, regarding Jessie Carden with a searching glance. "She looks like an obedient daughter. I trust that she may be the joy and support of your declining years, General Carden."

He rose abruptly and left the room, and did not return while the visitors remained. Nor did there seem anything rude in this action. In most men it would have appeared as studied incivility; but Peter Burt was not an ordinary man.

During the hour which followed, Jessie and John talked of a score of topics, John deftly turning the conversation from the runaway accident. When he said that he was about to enter Harvard, General Carden was much interested. He himself was a graduate of the famous class of '51, and recited the glories of the fair old college until Jessie interrupted him, and declared there were more important things to discuss.

As John Burt looked into the face of the girl beside him, it seemed impossible to realize that this was the prattling child he first met in charge of her governess.

How dainty, yet how healthy, Jessie looked! The July sun had begun its etching of tan. The slender neck, where the brown tresses protected it, was dazzling, shading away to cheek and brow in blendings of cream, pink and tan, which defied touch of brush or skill of words. The arched eyebrows and the dark silken lashes framed eyes which glowed with the smouldering fires of dawning womanhood. The mouth was not too small, and the lips were ruddy as ripe cherries.

And this was the being he had saved from mutilation against the cruel rocks! As he looked at her, heard the rippling music of her voice, and felt the subtle inspiration of her presence, the thought came that there was something selfish in his joy and pride.

What was it? Is love selfish?

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMER DAYS

JOHN BURT sprang into his saddle with an ease that showed complete recovery from the runaway accident, and cantered to Jessie Carden's side. They waved their hands gaily to Mrs. Bishop, and galloped away under the arching maples that formed an avenue before the old mansion. It was John's fourth visit since Jessie's arrival, and his suggestion of a ride to Hull had been smilingly accepted.

"Which way shall we go?" asked John, as they neared a fork of the road.

"Take your choice; you are guide, John," replied Jessie, reining in her bay. "We have the day before us; let's take a long ride. You're host—you make the plans."

"Let's take Jerusalem road to Nantasket, and follow the beach to Point Allerton," suggested John.

"Yes, but we can't get anything to eat there!"

"I know; we'll have dinner in Hull. We can get back to Nantasket in time for the concert. After that, supper, and home by moonlight. Is it too ambitious?"

"I think it's jolly! Come on, let's gallop!"

A chaperon might have vetoed such an excursion, but the Bishops had known John since he was a child, and counted him more son than neighbor. General Carden's scruples on the question of ancestry had been speedily satisfied by his sister.

"He comes from as good stock as you do, Marshall," she declared. "His paternal grandmother was a Stanley and his mother was a Winthrop. Grandmother Endicott used to talk of her. John Burt is a gentleman, and a gentleman's son. I wish I had a boy like him!"

It never occurred to John or Jessie that there was anything unconventional in the proposed outing. An unusual but perfectly natural event had once more brought them together. They liked each other, and they were children of nature, unskilled in the petty restrictions raised by a menacing propriety.

They cantered along the stone-walled roads; through valleys curtained with foliage and fragrant with the subtle perfume of the forest; up ridges on whose crest they caught a glimpse of ocean, and felt its healing breath upon their cheeks. From the fields the incense of new-mown clover was wafted to them. They eased a moment to watch the toilers rhythmically swinging their scythes.

With light hearts they rode through the aisles of the pine woods, past the hotels, until they reached the seashore. The tide was out and they loitered along the beach, hard and smooth as asphalt. Their horses splashed knee deep in the surf. They paused to examine the bones of a ship which had been hurled to its death on the rocks years before. Sixty lives had been lost in the wreck, but children had made a playhouse of the vessel's skeleton, and their careless laughter

sounded to the mourning accompaniment of the waves.

An hour later they stood on the heights above Point Allerton. Below, the wide crescent of Nantasket Beach swung to the south and east; within it "crawled the wrinkled sea." Every foot of ground was hallowed by history and legend. From that point their ancestors watched the Chesapeake as she sailed proudly out to fight the Shannon; there they had wept when they learned that the brave Lawrence had gone to his death shouting encouragement to his crew. Thence Captain John Smith first sighted the harbor. The red warriors of King Philip camped where they stood. A short distance away the Mary and John had anchored with her freight of pioneers. A mile to the north stood Boston Light, and they pictured Lord Howe's fleet sailing past it, swelling disdainfully out to sea. Near by a black beacon marked "Nix's Mate"—the lost island devoured by the sea in response to a pirate's curse.

They rode quietly down the hill, followed the shell road past Stony Beach, and climbed "Telegraph Hill." The little village of Hull cuddled snugly to their feet, and beyond the wealth of Boston Harbor lay before them.

"This is where father recites poetry," laughed Jessie as they rested on the site of the old French fort. "You should see him! He stands and looks away over there to Boston—just like Daniel

Webster on a pedestal—then he recites a long poem. Do you remember it?

> "From cape to cape, search round our noble bay
> No lovelier sight than here can eye survey;
> From yonder hill when sunset's blazing sheen
> Sets in a golden frame the pictured scene,
> Let the eye wander freely as it will,
> Landward or seaward—all is beauty still!"

"Lunt's, isn't it?" said John Burt. "Why don't you quote Whittier?

> "Broad in the sunshine, stretched away
> With its capes and islands, the turquoised bay;
> And over water and dusk of pines
> Blue hills lift their faint outlines!"

To the west lay the blue hills of Milton, the tranquil Vesuvius of this American Naples. The island-studded harbor gleamed in the September afternoon. Out over the hungry Brewsters, past the bluff profile of Marblehead, out to where in the mellow distance was the faint outline of Cape Ann—the rugged sentinel of the fishing fleet—they gazed speechless and happy. The streaked ridges of Nahant, the green elms of Apple Island, the verdant terraces of Fort Warren, the bluffs of Long Head, the hermit cliffs of Peddock's, the round, green knoll of Bumpkins, the grassy hills of World's End, the amethystine gleam of Quincy and Weymouth, Boston's roofs confusedly hurled—these, set in a glorious backing of sapphire sea and turquoise sky, made the gifts God gave those two

that afternoon. In the harbor of Hull rested a fleet of yachts—

> So still the sails, they seemed to be
> White lilies growing in the sea.

"Isn't it good to be an American?" asked Jessie, as her hand stole into John's. Just then a full-rigged ship, making from Boston Harbor, spread her sails and stood out past them. Jessie looked at her as Lohengrin might have looked at the swan, and whispered:

"Wasn't it Longfellow who stood here and felt with us:

> "My soul is full of longing
> For the secret of the sea;
> And the heart of the great ocean
> Sends a thrilling pulse through me?"

"Yes, Jessie, not only Longfellow, but Emerson, Hawthorne, Thoreau, and Channing dreamed here," said John. "Lafayette built that fort, and the Count D'Estaing and Rochambeau camped here. Miles Standish fought Indians on that plain, and to us loyal New Englanders every foot is sacred—but, Jessie, too much poetry makes poor feeding. I'm hungry."

"So am I," laughed Jessie. "Come on, I'll race you to the inn!" and she sprang to her saddle before John could assist her.

Picking their way carefully down the steep hill, they reached the hard roadbed. Then Jessie spoke to her horse and dashed ahead. She was a good

rider, and, though it was a close race, John gallantly conceded defeat.

In the dining-room were many guests from Boston, and they united to make a merry party. It was three o'clock when they started again for Nantasket. They trotted gently through Love Lane, past the old Cushing place, until they came to the ancient Hull turnpike, which has been compared to the Appian Way. The next five miles they covered at a canter.

As John helped Jessie from her horse at Nantasket some one touched him on the shoulder. John turned.

"Haou de ye dew, John?" exclaimed a strange figure of a man, standing there all grins. "I swan, I'm glad ter see ye up an' 'round agin! Haou de ye dew, John? Haou air ye?"

"All right, Sam," said John shaking hands.

Sam was the country sport of Rocky Woods, with a fame extending to Cohasset and not wholly unknown in Hingham. He owned the only thoroughbred trotting horse in the neighborhood. Hitched to a wonderful sulky, this animal stood at the curb, attended by an admiring group of boys, to one of whom had been awarded the honor of holding his head. It was Saturday, and Sam was in gala attire. He was tall and awkward. His large, good-natured mouth, wide open, displayed rows of white teeth; his small blue eyes twinkled shrewdly, and his ears stood clear of a mass of red hair.

He wore a white cap with a gold band and a long, rakish visor; a checkerboard suit, with large squares of brown and gray; a high collar, which did not conceal the elongated, freckled neck; a flaming red scarf, with a "stone" of startling size and setting; a double watch-chain, with a twenty dollar gold piece as pendant; yellow spats above pointed shoes, the projecting soles of which were milled with bright yellow threads. Such were the more conspicuous features of Sam's attire as he accosted John Burt.

John glanced again at Jessie, and the laughter in her eyes was a sufficient hint.

"Miss Carden, let me present Mr. Rounds, a schoolmate and neighbor."

Sam doffed his cap with a sweeping bow.

"Delighted ter meet ye, Miss Carden," he exclaimed, with a sincerity which did not belie his words. He extended a huge hand. "Have often seen ye ridin' by and heerd all erbout that air runerway. I swan, that was a mighty ticklish shave fer ye, Miss Carden! Good thing John was around. Lucky fer John, too, I reckon!" Sam grinned and looked at John, whose face flushed. "Don't mind what I say, Miss Carden! I say a lot of things besides my prayers; don't I, John. Tell ye what let's do! Let's have some sody water an' ice cream. It's my treat to-day! Sold a hoss this mornin' an' made forty-two dollars clean profit on him. I'm great on hosses, Miss Carden.

John, here, runs ter books an' studyin' an' all that. But, as I say, my strong holt is hosses. They say we all has our little weaknesses—present company, of course, excepted. Let's go an' git that sody an' ice cream." And Sam led the way to a pavilion and impressively ordered the suggested refreshments.

Jessie engaged Sam in conversation, laughing merrily at his odd remarks and stories. He pointed to an old farmer who drove past in a rickety wagon.

"There goes old man Shaw," said Sam. "He lives down the road from our house, an' he's a great character. He's lived whar he does now fer sixty year or more, an' he's the most regular man in his habits anywhar near Hingham. John knows him. He goes ter town every Saturday, an' he's comin' back now. Never was known tew buy nothin', though he did try tew buy one garter once, and kicked because the clerk wouldn't sell him less'n a pair. He's just got in the habit of goin' tew town on Saturday afternoon, an' he can't break hisself on it. He hitches that old hoss up tew a post, walks 'round town solemn like fer an hour er more, talks ter the blacksmith, an' then climbs inter the wagon an' goes back home. He had a great time yesterday," and Sam's eyes danced with laughter.

"Tell us of it," insisted Jessie, though Sam needed little urging.

"As I said afore, old man Shaw is very reg'lar in his habits," continued Sam. "He lives near the

crossroads, where thare's a post office an' two er three stores. Well, every mornin' fer forty years back, old man Shaw has gone tew the post office, an' asked if thare was eny mail fer him. Thare's never been a letter fer him, an' it ain't likely thare ever will be, but when a habit once gets sot on old man Shaw, he can't git rid on it nohow. So he keeps on askin' fer a letter, though thare's no one in the world tew write him one.

"After he leaves the post office he walks down tew Jones, the cobbler's place, which is in the basement. Thare he meets Jones an' two other old fellers, an' they plays seven-up all the forenoon. They plays just fer fun, but they plays as hard an' gets as excited as if they was playin' fer a thousand dollars a game. When it comes noon they all quits an' goes home. These four old fellers has been playin' that air game of seven-up ever since I can remember.

"Yesterday mornin' Mrs. Shaw told the old man the cistern orter be cleaned out. It hadn't rained fer so long that the water was all gone, and she 'lowed it was a good chance tew clean it out. Old man Shaw 'lowed she was right, but said his rheumatics was so all-fired bad it wouldn't dew fer him tew go down intew no damp place like a cistern; so he lowered the old woman an' sent her down a pail of water an' some soap an' a scrubbin' brush.

"'I'll go down tew the post office an' see if thare's a letter, an' then come back and pull ye out,'

he hollered down the openin.' She said, 'All right,' an' went tew work. Old man Shaw went tew the post office, asked fer a letter, an' of course, thare warn't none. He started back, an' was just passin' the cobbler's place, when he met Jones.

"'Whare ye goin'?' he asked old man Shaw.

"'The old woman's cleanin' the cistern, an' I've got tew go home an' haul her out,' says Shaw.

"'She ain't got it done yet,' says this no-account Jones. 'It takes a powerful long time ter clean a cistern out proper. Bill an' Gus is down stairs waitin' fer ye. Let's play 'em one game, an' then ye can go home an' pull the old woman up. The way them fellers beat us yesterday was shameful. They're braggin' about it now. Let's lick 'em one game eny way.'

"Old man Shaw said he would play just one game. He sot down an' they went at it. He an' Jones lost the game by one point, an' then they played 'nuther. That time they won, an' then they played the rubber. It seemed so nat'ral tew be playin' seven-up that old man Shaw just plumb fergot all about his wife bein' down in the cistern, an' they kept on playin' until the clock struck twelve.

"As I said before, it's always dark down in Jones' basement, an' none on 'em took any account on what was goin' on. You know how it rained yesterday mornin'? It started in tew pour 'long about nine o'clock." Sam paused to laugh. "When old man Shaw came out er Jones' base-

ment, the gutters was full of water an' the rain was comin' down in sheets. For three hours it had been rainin' cats an' dogs!"

"That poor old woman!" exclaimed Jessie. "It rained dreadfully. You should be ashamed to laugh, John Burt," she added, vainly attempting to repress a smile.

"It was pretty tough on her, an' no mistake," said Sam. "It was rainin' like sin, an' old man Shaw was plumb scared ter death. He ran all the way home. Every time he looked at a gutter-spout he nearly fainted away. He come tew his place an' ran 'round the back way. He looked down the hole an' saw nothin' but water.

"'Sallie! Sallie!' he hollered.

"The old woman was standin' on top the bottom of the pail, up agin the wall. The water was up tew her chin, but she was mad all over, an' she hadn't lost her voice.

"'Ye've come at last, Bill Shaw, have ye?' she said. 'You haul me outer here quicker'n scat, an' when I gets up I'll scratch yer eyes out! Ye done this on purpose! Ye haul me out, an' I'll fix ye fer this day's work!'

"The old man lowered a rope, an' after a hard tussle hauled her up. The neighbors say she mopped him all over the yard, an' I say it sarved him right."

Sam related several other incidents in the career of the Shaws, and Jessie laughed until the tears ran

down her cheeks. They bid Sam good-day, and watched him until he disappeared with the famous trotter in a cloud of dust.

The surf was dotted with bathers, and the temptation to join them was too great to be resisted. They spent an hour in the water, and emerged refreshed and ravenously hungry.

After supper they waited for the rising of the full moon. They saw the stately orb of night break above the ocean's rim and blend its white light with the pink afterglow of sunset. It silvered a broad path which cut the sombre shaft of Minot's Light. The curling breakers broke into phosphorescent flame, and the edges of the cliffs were frosted with its pure glow. From a rocking yacht just beyond the line of surf came the tinkling of guitar and zither, harmonized with a rollicking song of the sea. A great steamship, dotted with yellow lights, swung majestically into the harbor.

The moon began her dizzy climb. Bathed in her flood, they turned their horses homeward, riding through a shadowed and shimmering fairyland. Touched by the magic wand of night, the dreary huckleberry patches became Italian gardens. The gnarled and wind-wrenched apple trees were etched in lines of weird beauty against the sky. The rugged stone walls were softened, and faded away into dreamy perspectives.

They turned into the gloom of the maples, and found Mrs. Bishop waiting by the old gate.

"Did you have a good time?" she asked, kissing her niece.

"Oh, glorious, auntie!" exclaimed Jessie. "I never had so good a time in all my life!"

In the years which followed, how the scenes and incidents of that summer came back to John Burt! Under many skies he recalled the happy hours spent with Jessie Carden. Again he drifted with her in a boat, floating at will of breeze and tide, her hand trailing in the water, and the murmur of her voice in his ears. Again he stood with her in the night shadows by the old well, lowering the bucket into its cool depths. He saw the water glistening in the cup as he handed it to her; saw the soft light of her eyes; the sheen of her hair; and felt the thrill of her touch when their hands met. Again they walked down the wooded path, while the black of the night stood like a wall in front of them, and Jessie clutched at his arm when an owl sounded his solemn cry.

Jessie was going to Vassar, and John had passed the examination which admitted him to Harvard. He found that he could study much better under the shade of the Bishop trees than in any other spot, and Jessie held the text-books while he recited. The weeks glided by like a dream.

One day in autumn he stood by her side on the station platform in Hingham. As the train rum-

bled in, something rose to his throat and a film stole over his eyes.

"Good-bye, John!"

"Good-bye, Jessie!"

The train glided out from the station; a little hand fluttered a lace handkerchief from a window; a sunburned pair waved in reply. Jessie had gone back to Boston.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ARTHUR MORRIS

WHEN Randolph Morris had amassed a couple of millions in New York banking and stock manipulation, he decided to establish a New England country place in keeping with his wealth and station. He selected a site near Hingham, overlooking Massachusetts bay, with a distant view of the ocean. He purchased and consolidated a number of small holdings a few miles distant from Peter Burt's farm. For years workmen were busy with the great stone mansion. Terraces, verdant in turf, gave beauty to the surrounding rocks now softened with vines. Stables, conservatories, and lodges lent new distinction to the landscape.

The eldest of the Morris children was Arthur, the heir to the bulk of the Morris fortunes. His age was twenty-four, and his experience in certain matters that of a man of forty. He was of medium height and stocky build, with features of aristocratic mould, but weakened and puffed as from habitual excesses. He had recently attained the notoriety of an unconditional expulsion from Yale. His name had figured in New York prints in an escapade with a foreign actress, but the story was denied and suppressed before it reached the usual climax.

No whispers of these and other bits of gossip —accurate or otherwise—had reached the locality

where he was to spend the summer. He proceeded to dazzle the country folk and bewilder the staid city people by the brilliancy of his equipages, the speed of his horses, and the extent and perfection of his apparel. His steam yacht, rich in mahogany and resplendent in brass and lacquer, rode at anchor in the bay, awaiting his pleasure.

Commencement days were past. One June morning Jessie Carden arrived in Hingham, and was met by Mr. and Mrs. Bishop in the old family carriage. Arthur Morris also chanced to be at the station. He was standing at the head of his tandem leader, his heavy face gloomy with a bored expression. He listlessly toyed with a whip, and glanced at the arriving passengers as if faintly expectant of seeing some one of his acquaintance.

The Bishop carriage was next to his trap. As Jessie Carden ran forward and affectionately greeted her relatives, Arthur Morris abruptly recovered from his lassitude. He gazed at Jessie with a scrutiny too close to be condoned as "a well-bred stare." She wore a gray traveling dress, and looked so charming that one might be pardoned for an almost rude admiration. During the few minutes which passed while the trunks were coming from the baggage-room, Arthur Morris watched her as if a radiant being from another world had appeared to his enraptured vision.

"Gad, but she's a beauty!" he exclaimed, as Jessie stepped into the carriage. "Thank God

there's at least one good-looking girl in the neighborhood! Who the devil is she? Stranger, I suppose. James," he said in a low voice, addressing his tiger, "get in and be ready to take the horses if I tell you."

"Yes, sir," replied the boy solemnly, raising a gloved hand to his hat. Under a strong curb the horses followed the Bishop vehicle.

Delighted to return to the country, Jessie Carden little suspected that her arrival had so aroused the blase blood of the banker millionaire's son. It was a long drive, but at last Arthur Morris saw the carriage turn into the Bishop yard. He drove leisurely past the place till he regained the main road.

On the old bridge spanning the creek he met a young man in a light road wagon. Morris halted his team, and signaled the driver with a wave of his hand.

"I say, who lives in the big house to the south, on this side of the road?"

"Mr. Bishop lives there—Mr. Thomas Bishop," replied John Burt.

"Thanks," said Arthur Morris with a short bow. "Any daughters? I'm a new comer in this locality," he explained with a smile meant to be confiding.

"Mr. Morris?" asked John, as he surveyed the handsome equipage and its owner.

"At your service," smiled Arthur Morris.

"My name is Burt," said John. "The——"

"Glad to make your acquaintance, Mr. Burt," said Arthur Morris, extending a soft, fat hand across the space which separated the vehicles. John shook hands, and his face glowed with a pleasure which Arthur Morris imagined was due to the honor of meeting so great a man as himself. John, however, was thinking of Jessie, and the words of the stranger convinced him that she had returned. John had been back from Harvard twenty-four hours.

"Mr. Bishop has no daughter," said John, proud to give information on a subject so dear to him. "The young lady in their carriage was probably Miss Carden. She spends the summer seasons with them. She's expected to-day from Boston."

"Carden? Carden?" repeated Morris, as if the matter were merely of passing moment. "I fancy I've heard of her people."

"Her father is a Boston banker."

"Ah, yes; I know. Lovely old place—that of the Bishops—isn't it? Fine old gables, and an air of age—Pilgrim Fathers, and all that sort of thing, don't you know. Think I'll try to induce the governor to buy it. Lovely day! Delighted to have met you, Mr.—Mr. Brown. Git up, you brute!" and the tandem was lashed past John Burt.

That evening after dinner Arthur Morris found

his father in the library. For some time both smoked in silence.

"I say governor," said Arthur, as if the thought had suddenly occurred to him, "do you know any Cardens in Boston?"

"I know Marshall Carden, the banker," growled the millionaire. "What about him?"

"Oh, nothing much," rejoined the son carelessly. "What's he worth?"

"He's worth more than ever he'll be again," said Randolph Morris grimly. "He's in L. & O. stock up to his neck. If you knew as much about stocks as you do about trousers, that would mean something to you—but it doesn't. Carden is supposed to be worth half a million. When he gets through with L. & O. some one else will have the money and he'll have experience. What do you want to know about Carden? Has he a daughter?" The old man looked sharply at Arthur Morris.

"Yes, he has, and she's a beauty," he replied with the air of one giving an expert opinion.

"Well, you keep away from her!" said the old man gruffly, as he lighted a fresh cigar and paced up and down the room.

"Let her alone. Don't you bother about any daughter of Carden's. She'll never have a dollar. Do you understand?—not one dollar. Carden's ruined right now, but he doesn't know it. I do. What about this daughter?" he demanded, pausing

in front of Arthur. "Is she stopping around here?"

"She is spending the summer at Bishop's—a farmhouse about five miles from here," replied the son. "I saw her to-day, but didn't have a chance to speak to her. She's a dream, governor! I don't care anything about your O. & U., or R. & L., or whatever stock her father has been fool enough to buy. I suppose you will get the money—you generally do. I want to meet Miss Carden, and you must help me. She's a deucedly pretty girl, and the Lord knows pretty girls are scarce enough in this God-forsaken wilderness. Do you wish me to be a monk in this old monastery? Say, governor, you must write to Carden before that G. and D. stock downs him, and say you've learned that his daughter is here, and that you and your family will be delighted to meet her socially, and will try to make her stay in the country agreeable. I'll represent the family in the entertaining."

"I'll do nothing of the kind!" roared Randolph Morris. He stormed and fumed for a while, and then wrote the letter, as his son knew he would from the beginning.

"There it is!" he said as he handed the envelope to Arthur. "You'd better tear it up. But you're a fool—always were and always will be. For God's sake, don't marry the girl!"

Arthur Morris leaned back in the chair and laughed.

"I have never spoken to her, governor," he said, putting the letter in his pocket, "and I certainly don't contemplate matrimony. Can't a man have a summer flirtation without a marriage at the end of it?"

"I never could," said Randolph Morris with the forced grin which was his nearest approach to a laugh. He rang for a glass of brandy, drank it, growled a good night to his son and heir, and retired.

Jessie's father replied to Randolph Morris' letter, thanking him for his courtesy, and accepting it on behalf of the young woman. General Carden added that he would be at the Bishop house on the following Saturday, and would take pleasure in calling on Mr. and Mrs. Morris and presenting his daughter.

Jessie was greatly excited when a letter came from her father notifying her of the invitation which had been received and accepted. The general considered the incident a gratifying recognition of his increasing importance as a financier. To associate on terms of social equality with Randolph Morris was an honor he thoroughly appreciated. Jessie knew little of the business prestige such recognition entailed, but was delighted with the opportunity to meet the famous Morrises, and in despair over the gown she should wear.

The day after she received the note from her father John Burt called, and they took their first

horseback ride of the summer. Each had many things to tell the other, and it was jolly to compare notes and recount their troubles and triumphs in the college months which had sped. They galloped for miles along the hard sand of the seashore, and dismounted to rest and talk beneath the shade of pleasant trees.

Jessie told him of the letter from her father, and with some pride talked of the invitation from Randolph Morris. At first John shared in her delight, but his face grew thoughtful, and indefinable fear cast its shadow over him. Something seemed to whisper that this invitation was fraught with menace.

He looked at the slip of paper in Jessie's hand, and it appeared like a wedge about to separate them. And why should it not? What right had he to aspire to the love of Jessie Carden, the daughter of a rich man; beautiful beyond any woman he had ever seen? The fear, which ofttimes became a certainty, that Jessie would pass beyond his reach, was the haunting terror of his dreams by day or night. She had everything—youth, health, beauty, wealth and position. He had youth and health—so had the average farm laborer.

"Let's climb Strawberry Hill and watch the sunset," suggested Jessie.

John helped Jessie up the steep, winding path, and they stood on the crest of the hill. The broad Atlantic lay to the east, and the island-dotted bay

glowed in the colors of a glorious sunset. At the horizon was a mass of clouds; above burned a bar of red—the red of blood. To the zenith were spread the gorgeous tints with which the setting sun tinseled the closing curtains of night. Delicate greens toned through the shades of orange into rich amethyst, and against this background a lacework of clouds flaunted the thousand gradations of the spectrum. But the bar of red above the dun cloud dominated. It was reflected in the water of the bay, shimmering in the rubescent glow.

They stood silent for minutes under the spell of nature's grandest spectacle. The sun dipped lower until its arc touched the line of the cloud. Sharp as a knife, the black bank slowly obscured the face of the sun, until a red hemisphere, weird and unreal, glowered and quivered in the western sky.

CHAPTER EIGHT

JEALOUSY

JESSIE CARDEN'S reception in the Morris mansion opened to her a new and an attractive world. Accustomed from childhood to the comforts and luxuries of comparative wealth, she was awed by the magnificent sensuousness of the millionaire's palace, and by the pomp and splendor of its decorations and fittings. The massive granite entrance, the grand stairway of gleaming marble, the mosaic floors, the carvings and sculpture half hidden by palms and ferns, the priceless tapestry and paintings, bespoke affluence unbounded.

After formal introductions and a brief conversation, the elder Morris invited General Carden into the library for a business conference, and left the young people to their pleasure. Jessie thought the Morris girls charming, but Arthur contrived to inveigle her away from them and to lead her through the grounds. From a hill he pointed to his yacht, the Voltaire, at anchor in Hingham Bay. He was polite, attentive, and vivacious—traits rarely exhibited by this pampered young man, who at twenty-four found many of the joys of life ashes upon his lips.

Nevertheless, without attempting to analyze or justify her feelings, Jessie was not favorably impressed with Arthur Morris. There is a psychological barrier between vice and virtue; an instinct which places innocence on guard. The young

man's personality was of slight importance at the moment, but Jessie did not like him—why, she neither knew nor cared. To a man of fine mental and moral fiber this aversion would have been telepathically apparent without spoken word or mannerly rebuff; but Arthur Morris was pleased and satisfied with his supposed progress. Jessie tactfully eluded his further attentions, and spent the remainder of the afternoon with his sisters.

After extending formal invitations for a call in return, General Carden and Jessie drove slowly homeward. The general was silent and depressed, as with existing or impending trouble.

Three days later Arthur Morris called at the Bishop house and found Jessie at home. They chatted for an hour or more, and he secured her consent to be one of a coaching party on the next Saturday. Had it not been for his presence, she would have enjoyed the expedition thoroughly.

Yielding to the repeated invitations of the Morris sisters, Jessie agreed to accompany them on a yacht cruise to Gloucester on the following Tuesday. During this trip the attentions of Arthur Morris became so insistent that she resolved to check them at the earliest opportunity. An inkling of the truth dawned upon the owner of the yacht, muddled as he was with wine, but this suspicion did not deter him from announcing that he would call at the Bishops' place on Saturday to take her on a drive behind a team of blooded steppers,

recently arrived from New York. Jessie was silently indignant at his cool presumption. When the party landed at the pier, Morris was not a little astonished at the curt refusal she gave to his proffer of escort.

More than a week had passed since John and Jessie watched the red sunset. From Sam Rounds —who knew of everything that happened for miles about—John heard of the yachting party, and drank deep of the lover's first cup of suspicion, bitter with the wormwood of jealousy. The great Morris mansion became a wall which mocked his ambitions. The Voltaire took on the shape of a thing of evil, gliding out to sea with the one who was nearest and dearest to him. He pictured young Morris, surrounded by the trappings of wealth, paying homage to Jessie. He heard suave compliments; saw the smile on Jessie's lips, and felt the delicate flush on her cheeks. The thought was maddening.

He decided to call on Jessie and learn his fate. Invigorated by the ride, the thought occurred, as he crossed the old bridge, that he had never said a word to Jessie of love. It dawned on John Burt that he was a jealous fool.

When he entered the shade of the Bishop maples, he was once more in his right mind. His heart leaped when Jessie came forward to meet him. There was tenderness in her eyes and welcome in the clasp of the warm little hand which nestled for

an instant in his. To her question concerning his absence John made an evasive reply, and rather abruptly asked how she enjoyed the visit to the Morris mansion and the cruise on the Voltaire.

He was answered by a toss of the little head and a tightening of the lips, eloquent and decisive in their emphasis.

"Saddle my horse, John; let's ride!" she said.

Puzzled but delighted, John obeyed, and set himself stolidly to enjoy her presence as they galloped along the beach.

"Have you an engagement for Saturday?" asked Jessie as they rested beneath the old willows at the base of Strawberry Hill.

"I have none. Can I do anything?" asked John eagerly.

"I have cousins who live near the beach twelve miles south of here," said Jessie. "I want to spend a day with them. They are lovely girls, and I know you would like them. Uncle Tom and his men are busy, and I thought perhaps you could drive me over early in the morning. Do you think you could endure the company of three foolish girls all day, John?"

"I could enjoy the company of one wise little girl forever," said John, with a fervor which astounded him when the words were uttered. A blush suffused Jessie's cheek, but her drooping eyes expressed no rebuke. "I—I—shall be delighted to be your escort," stammered John, far

more confused than the subject of his ardent compliment. "When will you be ready, Jessie?"

"You may call at 8 o'clock if you will," said Jessie, without raising her eyes.

They rode slowly homeward in the glow of the twilight. The barren country, with its sands, marsh, shrubs and rocks, was a fairy realm to John Burt. The sand was spun gold; the marsh a wilderness of flowers; the shrubs pendent with diamonds; the rocks turreted castles; the fair girl by his side a princess, and he a gallant knight whose life was at her service.

It was ten o'clock in the morning when the Morris trap stopped in front of the Bishop farmhouse. Tossing the reins to a groom, Arthur Morris sounded the old-fashioned knocker, and the maid responded. Morris was looking his best. His eye was clear, and his smooth, plump face was ruddy.

"Present my compliments to Miss Carden," he said, offering a card.

"Miss Carden is not at home," replied the maid. "She left early this morning with Mr. Burt for a visit to relatives some miles from here, and said she would not return until late in the evening. Will you come in, sir?"

"No, thank you. Very sorry, I am sure." His face grew dark, but his voice was quiet as he said: "Tell Miss Carden of my disappointment, and say I'll call some day soon."

The maid courtesied and watched Arthur admiringly as he strode down the path and rode away.

"Miss Jessie's a foolish little body to be running around with John Burt when rich men's sons come knocking at the door!" she soliloquized as the glittering rig disappeared in the turn of the road.

General Marshall Carden paid a visit to the farm a week later. After dinner he invited Jessie to a walk, and his manner told her that something was impending. They paused to rest under an arbor. The sun purpled the clustered grapes until they glowed like rubies in settings of emerald. For some moments both were silent.

"I have something to say to you, Jessie, which I wish could be left unsaid," began General Carden, clearing his throat uneasily. Jessie looked into his face with questioning eyes. "You are nearly seventeen, Jessie, and are now a woman," he continued, after a pause. "You belong to a good family; and, God willing, you will inherit a modest fortune. You are very beautiful, my pet, and it is natural you should have admirers. It shall never be said, when you come to an age when I must yield you to another, that your father selfishly influenced your choice in the most sacred of all decisions. But that, Jessie, is for the future. At present you should willingly be guided by the wishes and kindly advice of your father, who is de-

nied the loving aid of your mother, of sainted memory."

"Yes, papa," said Jessie, softly. "What have I done to make you speak this way, papa?"

General Carden started to speak, but could not find words.

"I will explain to you frankly what has happened," he said finally, determined to end an unpleasant task. "I received a call yesterday from Mr. Randolph Morris. We are interested in a business affair of much magnitude; one which you could not comprehend, and which I need not explain to you. In a casual way Mr. Morris spoke of you and sent his compliments. He congratulated me on having so lovely a daughter, and expressed regret that his family had failed in an attempt to make your visit to the country more enjoyable. Of course this greatly surprised me, and when I pressed him for particulars he said he knew nothing, except that Arthur had called and that you had refused to see him." General Carden paused.

"I don't wish to see him, papa," said Jessie with much spirit. "I don't like him, and I hope he will never call again!"

"You don't like him? And why don't you like him, my pet?"

"I just don't like him," said Jessie with conclusive feminine logic. "He annoys me. He said he would call Saturday and take me out riding, and never so much as asked me if I cared to go or not.

So I went to visit Cousin Edith, and when he called the maid told him I was out."

General Carden looked greatly relieved. Conflicting emotions were struggling for mastery. Parental love contended with the stern exigencies of finance.

"I am glad that Arthur has given you no more serious cause for displeasure," he said. "He is impulsive and headstrong, and your rebuke was quite right. Do not misunderstand me, Jessie. It is difficult for me to explain this matter to you. You know little of business affairs, but you must know that Randolph Morris is powerful; a good business friend, and a foe to be feared. At the present moment I dread to incur his displeasure. It is the trivial things which sometimes weigh most in commercial affairs. Your slight of his son might be of vast consequence in determining Randolph Morris' decision in a matter most vital to our welfare, Jessie, my darling. It might even——" General Carden checked himself. His face was drawn with a distress which Jessie was quick to perceive, though not to comprehend,

"I do understand, papa dear," said Jessie. "I will write and ask Mr. Morris to call, and will treat him just as if nothing had happened. But I know I can never like him, and I don't have to try, do I, papa?"

"Certainly not, my pet," said General Carden. He kissed his daughter affectionately, and seemed

greatly pleased. Nothing more was said on the subject, and on Sunday Jessie wrote a note to Arthur Morris. Two days later he called, and Jessie received him in the old-fashioned parlor. Both ignored the incident of the preceding week, and chatted gaily for an hour or more. Jessie accepted his invitation to a reception in the Morris mansion for Saturday evening, and went under her father's escort. It was a grand affair, and scores of guests were present from New York and Boston. Arthur and Jessie danced several times, but Morris had sufficient tact to avoid repeating his mistakes.

Two weeks passed, during which the rich New Yorker was a frequent visitor at the Bishop farmhouse. These were weeks of torment to John Burt. Though Jessie greeted him as of old, he imagined he could see her slipping from his reach.

One evening John called when Arthur Morris was present, and Jessie introduced them. Arthur studied his country rival with ill-concealed contempt. He treated him with that airy tolerance which success grants to its vanquished.

"By the way, Mr. Burt," said Arthur Morris, as he carelessly rolled a cigarette, "Miss Carden has accepted my invitation to attend to-morrow's clambake near Cohasset. It's the great annual event, isn't it, of this vicinity? I wish you would join us. I must accompany a party of New York friends who will spend the night on my yacht, and attend the bake. We must start early in order to

make the long run past Boston Light and Minot's Reef, so I can't offer to escort Miss Carden. If I may presume on your acquaintance with her, I shall ask you to drive with her to the grove, where I will meet you with my friends."

"I shall be more than pleased if Miss Carden will accept my escort," said John.

"Certainly I will!" laughed Jessie. "It will be jolly to see who gets there first. We must start early, Mr. Burt, and take care the Voltaire doesn't beat us!" There was such a funny little accent on the "Mr." that John did not know whether to be hurt or pleased.

Arthur Morris remained a few minutes longer; then he gaily bade Jessie adieu, shook hands with John Burt, and rode away.

A brilliant red sunset threw a glare on John Burt's face as he lingered by Jessie's side at the gate in parting. Long spokes of red light sifted through the maple leaves, and earth and sky were bathed in a ruddy reek.

CHAPTER NINE

THE TRAGEDY

CHURCHILL'S GROVE was famous for its clambakes, and when John and Jessie drove into it the scene was one to delight the heart of a loyal New Englander. Years before, a thoughtful pioneer had planted long rows of pines, whose branches now interlocked, and whose tapering tops swayed and soughed a hundred feet above the carpet of cones and needle leaves. It was nature's cathedral; stately in long colonnades with vanishing perspectives; superb in gently undulating groined arches; glorious in the blendings of color, light and shade, and fragrant with the incense of balsam and fir.

Massed around the grove and the adjacent hotel were vehicles of every description. To the true Yankee, everything drawn by a horse or horses is a "team," and as Sam Rounds greeted John and Jessie he declared that he had "never seen so many teams in his life." Churchill's Grove fronts on the ocean, and a glance showed that the Morris yacht had not arrived. They watched the cooks preparing the bake in a sixty-foot trench, lined with heated rocks and covered with seaweed. In the steaming embrace of the weed were arranged vast quantities of clams, oysters, sweet potatoes, summer squash, green corn, cauliflower, beets, eggs, lobsters, soft-shelled crabs, bluefish, and the various fruits and meats of land and sea.

How savory it smelled! The cool, salt breeze from the ocean, the aroma from fir and pine, and the odor from simmering clam and seaweed formed a trinity ambrosial enough to make an Apicius of an anchorite.

"My sailboat is anchored near by," said John as they turned away. "The wind died out the last time I was here, and I had to leave her and walk home. Let's take a look at her."

John's eighteen-foot catboat, the Standish, lay near the long pier, bowing to the slow surge which swelled in from the Atlantic. For an hour or more they walked along the hard, smooth sand, crunching the shells under their feet; the song of the sea in their ears, and its cool breath on their cheeks. Then the great gong sounded the signal for dinner and they turned to the grove.

"Mr. Morris must have been delayed," observed Jessie as she glanced once more towards the harbor. "Come on; we won't wait for him."

The careless note in her voice, and the evident indifference with which she treated the other's absence, were particularly satisfying to John Burt, and they had a merry time over dinner. As they came out from the grove they saw the Voltaire at anchor, her upper works glistening in the sunshine. Her launch, crowded with passengers, was just leaving. They were hundreds of yards away, but their shouts and laughter sounded plain across the water.

When the launch approached, Arthur Morris was seen in the bow. There were several richly-dressed young women in the party. John Burt saw at a glance that Morris and some of his companions were under the influence of liquor. Jessie guessed as much, and her suspicions became a certainty when Morris stepped unsteadily to the landing, and came towards her, a vacant smile mantling his face. His stocky figure did not show to the best advantage in the white yachting suit, and his round, red face glowed beneath the gold-trimmed cap.

After shouting some unintelligible orders to his boatmen, and waving to his guests to follow him, Morris turned and addressed Jessie Carden. He did not recognize John Burt.

"A thousand pardons, Miss Carden," he said, his voice husky and his body very erect but wavering. "A thousand pardons! Detention unavoidable, assure you—un'void'ble detention, assure you! Had devil of time—beg pardon, Miss Carden—had terrible time. Kingsley fell overboard—'pon m'word he did—and struck the water. I tried to steer yacht and ran 'er 'ground. Fact! Ran 'er 'ground, and she's just got off. 'Sall right, though; 'sall right now. Allow me, Miss Carden," and he stepped forward to offer his arm. He had ignored John Burt, who remained by Jessie's side.

"Do not dare to speak to me, sir!" cried Jessie, shame and anger driving the crimson to her

face. "Don't let him come near me, John!" she exclaimed, clinging to Burt's stalwart arm.

"Stand back, Morris!" said John in a low, clear tone, a glitter in his dark gray eyes. "You are in no condition, sir, to meet Miss Carden."

The flashily-dressed throng of guests was grouped behind Arthur Morris. One of the young women cast a look of hate at Jessie Carden, and then grasped Arthur Morris by the lapel of his coat.

"Come on, you fool!" she said with a vindictive little laugh. "Don't you see you're not wanted? You haven't sense enough left to know your real friends!" She turned him half round, and Kingsley grabbed him by the arm.

"Come along, commodore," said that young blood whose immersion had done much to sober him. "You are in the wrong pew, commodore! Cheer up, sad sea dog; we may be happy yet!" And with laughter and taunts the guests of the Voltaire led the yacht's befuddled owner along the pier into the grove.

Jessie shed tears of vexation, but anger dried her eyes. She turned to John with a wistful little smile on her lips.

"Take me out in your boat, John," she said. "Let's get as far as we can from those dreadful people. Will you, John?"

No entreaty was necessary. In a few minutes the Standish bobbed saucily at the landing, and

Jessie stepped on board. The wind had scarcely filled the sail when Morris came running down the pier. He stopped as he saw the pair in the boat, and glared at them as they glided away, brute rage showing in every feature of his flushed face. His friends followed and led him back.

Little was said between the two as the boat moved swiftly along. Each was busy with thoughts, and both seemed under the spell of threatened trouble. John pointed the boat for Minot's Light, and having passed inside followed the rocky shore, avoiding the reefs and shoals, which were to him as an open book.

When he came to the jutting rock where he had knelt on that stormy night while Peter Burt lifted his voice in prayer, John dropped the sail and let the Standish drift in the quiet water.

Soft waves caressed the side of the boat, and the water gurgled among the rocks as it rose and fell to the deep breathing of the ocean. Minot gleamed white against the sky. Circling gulls skimmed the sea; the sun kissed the sails of an outbound brig and turned them to gold; fleecy clouds of spun silver floated in the blue dome, and the fairest face in all the world met his eyes as he looked into her's.

"Tell me a story, John, or anything! We're both awfully stupid to-day. Don't you think so?"

"I will tell you a secret—two secrets," said John, gravely.

"Don't tell me secrets if you wish them kept, John," laughed Jessie. "I'm a regular tell-tale!"

"You will keep these secrets—at least, one of them," replied John. "I'm going away. That's the first secret."

"Going away?" echoed Jessie. "Where, John?"

"Out West—to California."

"Going to leave Harvard? Going to California? Surely you're joking! What does this mean, John?" The little face was serious now.

"That is the second secret, Jessie."

There was that in his voice and in his eyes which thrilled the girl by his side. The chords of love when first struck, do not ring out the clear note of the attuned instrument. When love's eager fingers pluck clumsily at the strings, the heart vibrates, but it knows not why. Jessie's soft brown eyes opened wide, then dropped as they met his fervent gaze.

"I am going away, Jessie, because I love you."

The little hand became imprisoned in a tender clasp, and she listened as in a dream to the words which clamored for her love.

"I must tell you this, Jessie! I love you, Jessie, with a love which at times has seemed hopeless, yet I proudly offer you that love. Why should I not love you? What right has wealth to erect a barrier around your heart and post sentinels to challenge one who worships you unselfishly? I know that the false laws of society mock my hopes,

but in defiance of them I love you, Jessie—I love you!"

"Please don't, John, please!" The little hand trembled as it attempted to escape, but John held it fast.

"Listen to me, Jessie—listen to me!" His voice was commanding in its earnestness. "I do not ask you to love me, now. I do not ask you to promise to be my wife. I do not ask you to wait until I have made the fortune which I hope to lay at your feet. I only ask you to know that I love you; to know that this love is my inspiration; to know that no woman on earth shall ever share it, and to know that whatever befalls you—be it sunshine or rain, happiness or sorrow—there is one man who has no thought other than your welfare; who cherishes no ambition other than to see you showered with all the blessings and honors which God can grant to a good woman. That is my love, Jessie! If some day I have an honest right to ask your love in return, I shall do so, making no claim on our old friendship. May I love you that way? Say that I may, Jessie!"

"I—I want you to love me, John, but please don't speak of it again, John!" said Jessie, raising her eyes glistening with tears. "I mean—not to speak of it for years, John. I like you, and you know I do, or you would not talk to me as you have. I have not thought of love; at least, I—I don't think I have! Please, John, promise me that

you will not say anything more about it until—things are different. Will you promise?"

John Burt's face was radiant as he made the promise.

The sail was raised, and they started back towards the grove. The breeze had freshened, and the little boat flew through the water. John talked of his determination to go West. His plans were indefinite, but he was determined to start as soon as possible. Both were saddened at the thought.

John helped Jessie to the landing, and turned to see Sam Rounds running towards them.

"Excuse me," said he breathlessly to Jessie. "I want you, John!" He drew John aside. "Arthur Morris and his friends are drunk in the hotel," he said excitedly. "He says he's going to kill you, and he's insulted Miss Carden half a dozen times. He said"—and Sam bent over and whispered in John's ear.

John's teeth were set and his hands clenched, but his voice was calm as he turned to Jessie.

"I must go to the hotel for a few minutes. I'll meet you and Sam later," he said. "You'll excuse me, won't you, Jessie?"

"Oh, John, for my sake don't get into trouble!" pleaded Jessie, who guessed something of the truth.

John walked hurriedly away. Entering the hotel, he saw Arthur Morris and five of his male companions seated around a table loaded with

champagne bottles and glasses. Like many drunkards, Morris seldom passed beyond a certain stage of inebriety; and though he had been drinking for hours, he was more sober, mentally, than when he left his yacht.

John stood unobserved in the deepening shadows of the room. Morris was attempting to sing, hammering on the table with a cane to beat time. In peremptory tones he ordered more wine. Ranged around the rooms were groups of country boys, gazing with open mouths at such unheard of prodigality.

"You're a fine Lothario, commodore!" said Kingsley, as he slowly filled his glass. "Byron was a farmer compared with you. After all your boasts, you let a yokel cut you out, shake his fist in your face, and sail away with the fair maiden! Your *amours* weary me!"

"Hold your tongue, Kingsley!" growled Morris. "You'll sing a different tune a few weeks from now. As for this fellow Burt, I'll horsewhip him the first time I meet him! You need not worry about my success with the Carden! I have met and won that type of amorette before! That peach will ripen and fall. I'll wager you that in less than a year I will——"

John Burt glided across the room, grasped him by the shoulders, dragged him from the chair, and with a grip of iron shook him as a dog does a a rat. His wine-glass fell with a crash to the floor.

"Another word, you drunken insulter of women, and I will beat your head to a pulp!"

Morris' guests threw themselves between the two men, and John relaxed his grasp on Morris' neck. Dazed for the moment, Morris recovered himself, and his face became distorted with rage. Seizing a heavy bottle, he hurled it at John's head. The bottle missed its mark and crashed through a mirror. Reaching into his pocket with a quickness wonderful in his condition, he drew a revolver, and before any one could interfere fired pointblank at John Burt, who was not three yards away.

Like a panther, Burt leaped under the leveled arm. A second shot struck the ceiling. In a writhing, struggling mass, amid overturned chairs and tables, and the flight of panic stricken spectators, both men lurched heavily to the floor, John Burt uppermost. As they fell, a third shot was fired, the report being muffled as the shell exploded within their close embrace.

The smoking weapon fell to the floor from the nerveless grasp of Arthur Morris. John Burt seized it and thrust it into his pocket, but the precaution was unnecessary. Morris lay on the sanded floor of the inn, stark and deathlike, a frown upon his face. On the white flannel shirt above his heart was an ominous smear of red, slowly widening in a circle with each respiration, before the eyes of the men who bent over him. A froth tinged with blood oozed and bubbled from his mouth.

CHAPTER TEN

THE PARTING

WRITHING bars of smoke—nitric, pungent, and sulphurous—floated over the heads of those whose eyes were fixed on the prostrate figure of Arthur Morris. The afterglow streamed through the western windows, tingeing the edges of the smoke wreaths and scintillating with dust sparks hurled up in the struggle. The glass-strewn floor; the overturned chairs and tables; the blanched features of the revelers awed and sobered by the tragedy; the peering faces of country boys, wide eyed and open mouthed, clustered at door and window; the aged tavern keeper, wringing his hands at the sight of his wrecked belongings; the deadly silence, broken only by the long drawn and irregular gasps of the wounded man; the widening smear of red on the garment above his heart; the chill of the darkening shadow of death—such was the horror, unreal but actual, in which John Burt found himself the conspicuous figure.

He felt the touch of a hand on his shoulder, and, turning quickly, faced Sam Rounds.

"Fer God's sake, git outer here, John, as soon as ye can!" whispered Sam. John hung back defiantly. "Jessie's waitin' fer ye, John; she heard the shots, an' is scared most ter death! Ye promised, John, that ye'd come right back! He's a goner, an' it ain't no kinder use stayin' 'round here. Come on, John; Jessie's waitin' fer ye!"

At the sound of Jessie's name a wave of agony swept over John Burt. With a glance at the motionless form of Morris, he turned and followed Sam Rounds. No hand was raised to stop him. The witnesses of the tragedy, held in a spell, had eyes for naught but its victim.

"Tell ye what ye do, John," said Sam Rounds as they reached the open air, and faced the breeze from the sea. "Jump on my horse an' git away from here like lightnin'. Don't let 'em catch ye, John! I'll drive her home—you git out!"

"I shall do nothing of the kind," replied John Burt, as they neared Jessie Carden. "Go after the carriage and meet us here. Be as lively as you can."

"There it is!" said Sam, pointing a few rods away. "I hitched 'em up while you was gone so's ter have 'em waiting fer ye. But you'd better take my horse an' make a run fer it, John! I'll look after Miss Carden. They'll git ye, sure!"

John made no reply. Jessie ran forward to meet him, her face white with fear.

"Oh, what has happened, John? What has happened?" Her voice trembled and her lips parted with a vague terror. "Are you shot? Are you hurt, John? Oh, tell me, John!"

"I'm not hurt, darling," said John, looking into the uplifted eyes. "Something has happened, and we must leave at once. I will tell you about it on the way home."

A minute later they were speeding through the

gathering darkness. For some moments neither spoke. With appalling swiftness, a series of events —rearing like breakers in an angry sea—had swept over John Burt, and left him numb for the moment. Was it a dream, a cruel phantasmagoria invoked by fiends to torment a slumbering brain? Why had fate thrust this cup to his lips? What sin had he committed? The fair fabric of his ambitions crumbled before his eyes.

He turned and looked at Jessie. In the evening light the pure profile of her face was drawn like a cameo against the fading sky. The soft folds of her hair, the tender brow, the penciled eyelashes, the tempting lips, the firm little chin, and the slender neck—it was not a dream.

By a stern effort John Burt mastered his emotions and calmly told Jessie what had happened. He said no word of the shameful insults in which her name had been bandied in a public drinking place. He explained that a quarrel had arisen, during which Morris had been shot with his own weapon. Jessie listened breathlessly. It had grown so dark that John could not see her face, but there was a tremor in her voice when she asked:

"Will he die, John?"

"I fear so," replied John.

It might have been imagination, but he thought that Jessie shuddered and drew away from him. They heard the rapid beat of hoofs behind them, and she clutched his arm.

"They are coming after you!" she exclaimed. "Jump and run, John. I can drive home alone. Please do, John! Do not let them take you!"

She grasped at the reins as if to stop the horses. John checked the team and calmly awaited his pursuers. There was that in Jessie's voice and in the touch of her hand which filled him with wild, unreasoning joy.

Out of the darkness a horse, madly ridden, dashed forward, and was pulled back on his haunches by the side of the carriage. A face peered in—the homely but welcome face of Sam Rounds.

"Drive on as fast as ye can, John," gasped Sam. "I've thrown 'em off the scent. I ran the Standish out inter the bay, set 'er tiller an' let 'er go, an' come back an' told 'em you had given 'em the slip that way. Pretty slick, eh? You bet none o' them dudes can get the best of Sam Rounds! Git up!"

Sam gave the horses a cut of the whip which sent them dashing down the road. A few minutes later they reached the Bishop farmhouse. Sam held the excited horses while John helped Jessie to alight.

"Jump on my horse and git!" said Sam in a whisper.

John drew Jessie to the shadow of a maple, and held her hands in his.

"Jessie, I am innocent, but the world will hold me responsible for the death of that blackguard.

Sweetheart, I had dreamed of bridging the gulf between us. I had faith that some lucky star would smile on my ambitions; that my youth and health would one day make me worthy of the grandest gift God gives to man—the love of the woman he worships! That hope is not dead, but it has gone far from me. I must endure either imprisonment and disgrace at home or exile abroad. I can face either, Jessie, if I have the support of your friendship, and the knowledge that you hold me guiltless. Can you give me them, sweetheart?"

"Both, John," said Jessie, softly. "I—I—shall pray for your success. Go now, John! Take Sam's advice and mine. Good-bye, dear!" There were tears in the sweet voice.

"Will you kiss me, Jessie?"

Two warm arms were clasped around his neck, and a face wet with tears nestled for a moment on his shoulder. The light from the parlor window glistened in her eyes as she raised them to his, and she kissed him twice, with the live kisses that come from the heart of a woman whose affection has passed the mysterious border that separates friendship from love.

"It may be years, dearest Jessie, before we shall see or hear from one another. But my love tells me we shall meet again. Pray for me, darling. Good-bye, sweetheart, good-bye!"

"Good-bye, John; God bless you and guard you!"

"Good-bye, Jessie; good-bye!"

He watched her as she faded away from him and disappeared beyond the vines which shaded the veranda.

"Come on, John!" said Sam. "There's no time tew lose. Which way are ye goin'? Better take the Hingham road. Have ye got any money?" And Sam produced a roll of bills.

"Thank you, Sam, I don't need it." John's hand reached out to grasp that of his friend. "I'm going home. Grandfather will advise me what to do."

Sam told him to be careful, and with a hearty handshake bade him farewell.

"You can bet I'm allers yer friend, John, first, last, an' all the time," he said as the other vaulted into the saddle. "You'll win, John Burt, an' don't ye fergit that Sam Rounds allers said so. Ye're clean strain and thoroughbred, an' they can't down ye. Good-bye, John, an' good luck tew ye!"

Under the arched maples where he had walked with Jessie so many times; over the old bridge where first he met her, and down the sandy road where they had loitered in summer days now gone forever, John Burt urged the horse along. In the western sky flashes of lightning heralded a coming storm. It was two miles to Peter Burt's, and he soon reached the gloomy old house. A figure stood by the gate. No lights were burning, and the hour when Peter Burt habitually retired long since had

passed. John rode forward and recognized his grandfather.

"You did well to come home, my boy," said the old man, whose deep, calm voice held an anxious note. "Something has happened, and my soul has been calling you since dusk. There is no time to lose, my lad. Ride to the graveyard and I'll follow you. It isn't safe to talk here."

In the far corner of the old graveyard John Burt hitched his horse and turned to meet his grandfather. The old man seated himself on the grave of the pioneer Burt who, two hundred years before, had dared the dangers of the wilderness. Though the lightning flickered in the west and north, the stars shone bright above, and their dim radiance revealed the giant figure of the patriarch.

Eighty-three winters had marshaled their snows since Peter Burt opened his eyes in the old farmhouse. Yet his step was as springy, his eye as clear, and his voice as strong as on the day when John Burt's father was born. He was in his shirt sleeves, and the unbuttoned front showed a hairy chest, massive in its strength. The uprolled sleeves revealed the coiled muscles of his forearm, and the slender wrist peculiar to men of enormous strength.

"Now we can talk," he said. "Tell me what has happened."

Quickly John Burt related the incidents before the tragedy. He told of his love for Jessie, of his avowal in the boat, of Sam Rounds' information,

and of the fight in the tavern. The old man made no sign during the recital, and was silent for minutes after John had ended.

"He deserved to die, and it was written that he should perish by violence; but his blood is not on your head," began the old man calmly. "You had the right to kill him, and no sin will be charged against you in the Book of Life; but the laws of men may hold you in part responsible. There is no law but God's law, and the laws of men are pitfalls for fools. They are the weapons of the strong against the weak. If we transgress one of God's laws he will exact the penalty, not only in this world but in the hereafter. Murder, in the sight of God, is in the heart—not in the hand. I—I am——"

Peter Burt's voice broke, and a shudder swept over him; but he controlled himself, and continued:

"My boy, will you take your grandfather's advice? Will you heed his earnest admonition to the one being on earth he loves, for whom his prayers ascend to heaven?"

"I will, grandfather—I will!" replied John firmly.

"It is written in God's word: 'If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small; for a just man falleth seven times and riseth up again,'" said Peter Burt, laying his hand on John's shoulder. "God has willed that you shall be His instrument in

great undertakings, and it is decreed that the events of to-day shall not be a stumbling-block to your feet. His ways are not our ways, and He reveals Himself to few of His servants. I have prayed that you be given the gift of understanding, and God has answered my prayers. You are now to go out into the world, and though you may know it not, God will guide your footsteps. There will be times when the ways are dark, but the light will appear. Your ways will not be understood by men, and at times may not seem in harmony with God's plan, but He who directs the flight of a bird will not withhold His guidance to the heir of Peter Burt. Hath He not said: 'There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.' And, again, we are told: 'Happy is the man that getteth understanding. She is more precious than rubies, and all things thou canst desire are not to be compared to her. Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honor.' The key to all human greatness, John, is found in God's inspired words when He says: 'Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting, get understanding. Take fast hold on instruction; let her not go; keep her; for she is thy life.'"

The old man paused to let his words sink deep into the being of the young man beside him.

"God speaks to His servants not by word of mouth," Peter Burt said in a tone of unalterable

conviction, "but to those whom He selects as captains He gives an understanding heart. He who has the gift of understanding reads God's plans in the passing events which mean nothing to others. That gift is your choicest heritage, John Burt. It were folly to imagine that this unprovoked quarrel points to your undoing. It is the sign that you are at once to depart from fields you have outgrown, to take up your work in that broader sphere which is waiting you. The fool would remain and measure his innocence against the wealth and influence of those who devour widow's houses and who despoil the virtue of maidens. Something has whispered to me that you should go to California. To-day's event is the sign that you go now. It is plain as if written on parchment. You will start to-night, my boy, and God will be with you. Hush! I hear the hoofs of horses!"

In the silence of the night the muffled beat of galloping horses was heard from the base of the long hill. The old man jumped to his feet. He looked in the direction of Sam Rounds' horse.

"Officers are coming!" he said in a low voice. "I will meet them. Remain here till I return. Hold that horse by the nose lest he whinny."

As John sprang to the horse's head, the old man vanished in the darkness.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

EXILED

PETER BURT entered the rear door of his house, and was in his room when the tramp of steps was heard, followed by loud knocking. The old man waited awhile, as if dressing. He then lighted a lamp and stood in the hallway. The pounding had been repeated at intervals, and gruff voices were heard in impatient conversation.

"Who's there?" demanded the old man.

"Open the door and be quick about it!" was the response, with a kick and a pull at the latch.

"At this hour of the night my door opens to none who refuse names and errands?" replied the old man. "Go about your business and do not disturb honest folk!"

A mumbled conference followed. Peter Burt placed the lamp on a table and waited. A light knock sounded at the door.

"Is this Peter Burt?"

"I am Peter Burt."

"We are officers of the law, Mr. Burt," a clearer voice declared. "We are after John Burt, your grandson, who has killed a man."

"He is not here," was the calm reply.

"We must search the house, Mr. Burt," said the officer. "I warn you not to resist the execution of the law."

"Have you a warrant for his arrest, or a search warrant?" demanded the old man. "Show me one

at the window and I will open the door. If you have none, begone, and let me rest in peace."

Another conference followed, and the gruff voice rose in anger.

"Let us in, old man," it thundered. "Warrant or no warrant, let us in, or by God we'll pound your door down and take you along with your murderin' grandson!"

"Open my door at your peril!" said Peter Burt sternly. "Show me your authority, and you can enter my house. I know the law and will defend my rights. This house is my castle, and no man has ever entered it without my consent."

Growling threats, the men retired. In a minute they returned, armed with a log. Used as a battering ram, it was hurled against the heavy oaken door. For a time the stout frame resisted, but with a crash the jamb gave way and the door flew open. With an oath and a call to his companion, the larger of the two rushed in.

Peter Burt stood behind the splintered door in the dark hallway. As the man crossed the threshold, the patriarch's left arm flew out, and the corded fingers gripped the reckless intruder by the throat. There was a gurgling cry as the fingers buried themselves in the flesh. The second man hit the old farmer a glancing blow with the butt end of a revolver. With a catlike movement, Peter Burt wrenched his opponent's forearm. With a cry of pain the man dropped the weapon to the

floor. Before he could guard himself, Peter Burt dealt him a hard blow on the face, and gripped him by the neck as he reeled against the wall.

Holding the two men at arm's length, Peter cracked their heads together, and then dragged them into the room, where the lamplight fell on their faces. The protruding tongue and the blood-surged face of the one who had led the charge caused Peter Burt to relax his hold, and the man fell limp to the floor. A glance showed that his companion was senseless, and the old man stretched him out on the carpet.

He looked up. John Burt stood in the doorway. The noise of the battle had reached him, and, disobeying orders, he had run to his grandfather's assistance.

"Stay outside, John!" said Peter Burt with a grim smile. "You must not resist an officer. I will be with you in a few minutes. Don't be alarmed; they're not badly hurt."

There came to John's mind, as he waited in the darkness, the legends of his grandsire's prowess in the days of his prime. He remembered hearing that Peter Burt had been waylaid by ten men, and that with his hands and fists he had stunned and maimed them, heaping them like cord-wood by the side of the road. Yet to John he was tender as a woman, and in all their years in the old house his grandsire's hand had never been raised in anger against another.

Peter Burt produced a coil of rope from a closet, and with the dexterity of a sailor bound the senseless men. He searched their pockets for weapons, and then proceeded to revive them. A liberal application of cold water, followed by an inhalation of smelling-salts, produced the desired effect, and the men struggled back to consciousness.

"I have not gagged you," said Peter Burt, as he stood over them, "for the reason that your cries would bring you no assistance, and for the second reason that you are men of sufficient intelligence not to speak again until you are spoken to. As soon as convenient, I will give you more comfortable quarters. Now that you are here, you may spend the night with me."

Seating himself at a desk, Peter Burt wrote two letters, and sealed them. He then opened a huge, iron-bound chest, and for half an hour was busy with its contents. He was as cool as if casting up unimportant accounts. When his work was ended, he quitted the room without so much as a glance at the silent figures on the floor. John met him at the gateway.

"Here are your instructions, John," he said. "Go to your room and select such trifles as you can carry in your saddle-bags. You must make Plymouth before daybreak, and it will be a hard ride when the storm breaks. You know every foot of the way. Take the back road and keep away from the vil-

lages. This letter is addressed to a man in Plymouth. Here is a ring. Show him this ring with the letter. Stay in his house all day, and start for New Bedford about ten o'clock to-morrow night. You must arrive in New Bedford before daybreak, and go to the address on this second letter. When you find it show Captain Horton the letter and the ring. He will put you on board the Segregansett, which sails for the South Pacific in three days from now. This third package you will not examine until well at sea. Here is money. Enter the house and make no unnecessary noise. I will saddle your horse and wait at the barn."

The sky was aflame with lightning as John stood once more by the old man's side. The rumble of thunder told of the near approach of the tempest.

"John," said Peter Burt as he grasped the boy's hand in his, "I feel no sorrow save the pain of a temporary parting. This was decreed by One wiser than ourselves. I shall see you again, my boy; I shall clasp your hand in the vigor of your manhood, when success has crowned your efforts, and when your happiness is complete. Though I have lived long past the allotted span, the scroll of my days is not yet numbered. Do not write to me or attempt to communicate with me, or with any one, until you are rich and strong enough to meet your enemies on equal ground. You have the love of a woman I respect. She will wait for you. Do not

let the impatience of your love imperil your chances. I speak with authority when I say these things to you. During these coming years, let money be your ambition. You live in an age when money is the god of the material world. Understanding has been granted to you, and when you apply yourself to the struggle the thrill of knowledge will pervade you. 'A prudent man concealeth knowledge; the heart of fools proclaimeth foolishness,' says Solomon. Keep your own counsel, John, and 'buy truth and sell it not.' You have received a ken of this world's affairs, so that I can say to you in the language of Isaiah: 'I will give thee the treasures of darkness and the hidden riches of secret places.' Rest secure in that promise, have abiding faith in it, and hold no communication with those who love you until my prophecy has come to pass. Do you promise me, my boy?"

"I do, grandfather!" said John, who was deeply affected. "You have been so good——"

"Never mind, my boy; thank God, not me. Good-bye, John—God bless you!"

The first drops of the storm pattered on the dusty roadway as the old man raised his hands and gave John his blessing. Springing into the saddle, the boy caught one last glimpse of Peter Burt in a brilliant flash of lightning which glorified his heroic figure, his white hair shining as a halo above his brow. The trees guarding the old graveyard swayed in the first gust of the tempest. John put spurs to

his horse and fared forward on the wings of the gale.

A strange exhilaration tingled in the young man's veins as he swept along in the swirling embrace of the storm. There stole over him an exaltation, a sense of buoyant freedom, and a thrill of power which was intoxicating. The crashing artillery of the heavens; the tangled skeins of lightning; the roar of the wind; the bending pines, dim seen through lines of rain in the fitful glare; the swift shifting panorama as the horse leaped to the spur—such was the stage setting of which John Burt felt himself the central figure. The little New England district in which he had played so dull a part already faded beneath the horizon, and the greater world reared its heights, beckoning him to come and conquer. And of that new and grander world Jessie was the heroine—her bright smile encouraging him to victory.

It was four o'clock when he halted at a small house on the outskirts of Plymouth. Years before, with Peter Burt, he had visited the old sailor who was spending there his declining years. After repeated knocking, the old man opened the door. John handed him the letter and showed the ring. He read the letter and heartily greeted his guest.

"Enough said, my boy!" he declared, as he burned the letter. "You'll be as safe here as in God's pocket. Make yourself comfortable and I'll stow away your horse."

When the old man returned he prepared a breakfast which John ate with relish, and then his host showed him to a bed which, though hard, seemed the most delightful place he had found in years. The sun was low when John woke. After supper—breakfast to John—the old sailor spun yarns of the sea, though Peter Burt did not figure in any of these narratives. He did not betray the slightest curiosity concerning John's journey, and at ten o'clock his guest bade him farewell with sincere thanks for his hospitality.

The night ride to New Bedford was made without incident. It was three o'clock when John knocked at Captain Horton's door; and, much to his surprise, that gruff old mariner was up and dressed.

"Come in! I've been expectin' ye!" he said as he opened the door. "Glad to meet ye. Joe," he said, turning to a sleepy-eyed boy, "take care of this lad's horse."

John secured the contents of the saddle-bags, and an hour later stepped on board the Segreganssett. Captain Horton showed him his quarters and advised him to "turn in." He did so, and when he awoke the heaving and groaning of the old whaler told him that she was on the open sea.

John Burt lay in his bunk in that deliciously languid state which follows deep, refreshing sleep. Against the background of boyish years the events of recent hours stood forth vividly.

A light rap sounded on the door. He opened it, and was greeted by Captain Horton.

"Haow air ye, me boy?" exclaimed the broad-shouldered skipper. "Dinner'll be ready in a jiffy; if ye've slept enough, throw on yer togs and have a bite!"

"Thank you, Captain Horton," said John. "I shall be ready in a minute, and promise justice to your dinner."

It was one o'clock when he came on deck. The day was clear and bright, and the Segregansett was running south with all canvas set in the twenty knot breeze. In the northeast the peaceful hills of Martha's Vineyard rolled blue on the horizon, while to the west the black cliffs of Block Island reared defiantly. On the ocean's edge, to the north, a dim bank showed dreaded Point Judith. John Burt gazed fondly at these stern sentinels of New England's coast, and wondered when he would see them again. Before dusk the last trace of land faded from sight.

Not until the Segregansett had left the Bermudas did John open the package which had been given to him by Peter Burt. It contained a long letter from the old man, describing a spot in the California mountains, of which a dying sailor had told him years before. The poor fellow declared that he had found a rich deposit of gold, and that he was working his way back to Boston, hoping to interest the necessary capital. In Peter Burt's letter

was enclosed a rough map which the sailor had sketched when he realized that death stood in the way of his dreams of wealth.

There was also a parcel with an outer covering of oilskin. John unwrapped it and disclosed a large, old-fashioned wallet, which he recognized as having belonged to his grandfather. Years of use had worn its sides to a gloss which no art can imitate. In this wallet he found a layer of United States Treasury notes of large denominations. His fingers tingled as he handled the notes. Ten thousand dollars! He counted them again and again; not as a miser counts his gold, but with the eagerness of an ambitious man who gazes for the first time on the paper weapons of modern warfare. Jessie seemed much nearer as John looked at those bits of paper.

There was no memorandum in the wallet or in the letter in reference to this money. John knew that no such sum had been realized from his father's estate. He knew little of Peter Burt's wealth, but he was proud to think that he was deemed worthy to be intrusted with so large a sum.

The scenes and incidents of that eighteen thousand mile journey around Cape Horn are worthy of extended recital, but are not an essential part of this narrative. One bright afternoon the Segreganssett sailed into the harbor of Valparaiso, and a week later John Burt was a passenger on the steamer Reliance, bound for San Francisco.

A thousand leagues away, Jessie Carden treasured the secret of a sensation strangely akin to newborn love. As the days sped away which meant safety to John Burt, her spirits rose. He had vanished out of her life, but her faith in his innocence, and in his success and triumphant return, was strong and abiding.

On the walls of her class-room was a large map, and she loved to look at it and wonder what spot of land or sea held John Burt. Something told her that he was on the ocean, and she found pleasure in following his possible course through the tropics, across the equator, past stormy Cape Horn, and up the South American coast to California.

In the little college town there lived an old sea captain, who kept a small candy and stationery store; and Jessie became his regular customer. To the delight of this ancient mariner, she betrayed keen interest in tales of the sea. She asked many questions, which he answered, adding long narratives of experiences in "rounding the Horn," and of cruises in southern seas.

Thus, in fancy, Jessie accompanied John on his long journey, until a day came when she felt that he was in California, and that he had begun a struggle for his fortune—perhaps for her fortune. She smiled proudly when this thought came to her.

She pictured John Burt in the rugged wilds, and saw his handsome face and stalwart form against the background of snow-capped mountains. She

saw him amid dangers; saw him suffering privations —and all for her. Every printed line concerning the land of gold was associated in some way with John Burt.

Cupid had stolen upon her in the night. He had fired an arrow and fled. She felt the delicious tingle of the wound in her heart, and wondered if it was love.

Perchance, again, the great world into which John Burt had vanished held for him a destiny in which she bore no part. The dark veil which fate draws over the future yielded not to her small fingers. Love and hope ask a thousand questions which time alone can answer.

CHAPTER TWELVE

SAMUEL LEMUEL ROUNDS

"THE Roundses don't run much tew ancestry, I reckon; leastwise our end on 'em don't," Sam Rounds had explained to John Burt on one occasion. "Course I've got a lot of ancestors back somewhar, but who'n thunder they are, blamed 'f I know! When the old house in Rehoboth burned up some forty odd year ago the family Bible went with it, an' our ancestral tree was pulled up by the roots. There must 'er been a red-haired Rounds sometime or nother, else heow dew ye account fer me?"

Students of heredity must regret the Rehoboth conflagration, since it destroyed the last evidence in what would have been an interesting research. Among the numerous branches of the Rounds family Sam was *sui generis*. In appearance, traits and temperament he was no more like his near relatives than is a young hawk to a brood of chickens.

It is reasonably well established that a Rounds settled in Rehoboth fully one hundred years before Sam was born, but the latter's recollection did not extend back of his father—one Hiram Rounds. The annals of Hiram Rounds and his family can be epitomized in one word—work.

There is a type of New England farmer to whom physical labor is a religion, a passion and a mania. The virus of toil inoculated in the blood of the Puritans had been transmitted to them—intensified

by successions of drudging generations. Born of moiling parents who have known no world other than New England's rock-strewn fields and shrub-topped hills, certain of her children have successively taken up the struggle for a mean existence. Those upon whom the curse was not laid have escaped to the fertile prairies of the West or to the profitable activities of the cities. The record of their successes and the story of their triumphs arouse small envy in the breasts of those who remain behind, content to wring a pitiful harvest from a stubborn soil.

"Dad believed in work an' lots of it," explained Sam. "He looked like an old man when I first knew him, an' he wa'nt so old at that—only about forty when I was a kid of six or seven. Summer an' winter he was up at half-past four, an' you can bet the rest on us got up with him. We had a hired man once, but he didn't stay very long. The old man routed him outer bed at four o'clock one Monday mornin'—leastwise, so I'm told.

"'Git up, ye lazy, ornary hound!' says dad. 'Do ye want to sleep all day? Here 'tis Monday, an' ter-morrow's Teusday an' next day's Wednesday —with ther week half gone, an' not a darned thing done. Git up, an' mow that air medder!'

"Dad shorely was er hard worker an' no mistake," continued Sam, having settled the much-disputed authorship of that New England legend. "When thar wa'nt no work tew dew on our farm

he'd hire out tew ther neighbors fer fifty er seventy-five cents er day. And at night we'd all shave hoops after supper, working 'til nine an' sometimes ten o'clock. In the winter dad would haul logs tew Newport. He had two relays of hosses, an' he'd make the trip an' back without sleepin'—forty-eight or more hours at a stretch. Lots er times I've knowed him work till midnight, mowin' er loggin', an' he'd be up at four next mornin'. Every one used ter brag how hard they could work, but they all took off their hats tew dad. He shorely was the champion worker 'round Rehoboth. Lots er strong young fellers came up from Attleboro and tried to mow a swath with dad, but he bushed all on 'em."

"Killing himself to live," mused John Burt.

"Wall, I reckon he did—leastwise Doc Reynolds 'lowed so. Dad died when he was forty-eight. He teamed all night three nights runnin', workin' out the poll-tax fer the neighbors, an' he had 'er stroke. Doc warned him then tew let up 'er bit, but dad just somehow couldn't, and he pitched in ergain. He was shinglin' ther roof of ther barn, erbout eleven o'clock one night, an' I guess he had ernother stroke. The doctor couldn't exactly tell whether he had er stroke, er whether he fell off and broke his neck, er both—enyhow he was dead when they picked him up. I wasn't home at ther time—I was in Fall River workin' in the mills. When us young ones got tew be twelve years old most on us

was packed off an' set tew work in ther cotton mills er in the match factories. Five of my sisters worked in ther cotton mills. Nowadays ther workin' men are talkin' erbout er ten-hour day, an' some on 'em is strikin' fer an' eight-hour day. My sisters an' thousands of other girls used tew work from six o'clock in ther mornin' till nine at night, an' they was mighty glad tew git ther chance. Where air my sisters now? Two on 'em is dead, two married, and one's in an asylum."

This recital of the history of the Rounds family occurred shortly before the incidents related in the preceding chapter. Sam was a great admirer of John Burt, and though habitually reticent concerning his personal affairs, did not hesitate to make John his confidant. The latter recognized in Sam sterling traits which escaped the ordinary observer. Five years before, Sam had purchased a small farm near Hingham, and had devoted it to the breeding and raising of horses. The success of this venture had aroused the sluggish jealousy of neighboring farmers, who frowned on innovations and predicted the ultimate failure of Sam's enterprise.

"I've done fairly middlin' well, but I want tew dew better," Sam said. "None of the Roundses ever amounted tew nothin', an' I'm going tew try tew break er record. I never had much schoolin', but I wasn't sixteen years old when I larned that no man can git rich on a pesky little New England

farm. An' I've found out another thing, John, no man can git rich by his own work. He must either git others tew work fer him 'an pay 'em wages—smaller the better, of course—er else he must buy and sell things fer profit. Shore, he might discover a gold mine, but tew my thinkin' that's much in ther way of gamblin'. But, as I said, nobody can git rich on wages, nor by farmin' er loggin' 'round here. I don't reckon I'm mean enough tew run a factory or a shop, so I've gone inter tradin'. I knows hosses an' likes 'em, an' they likes me. An' I've done fairly middlin' well." Sam's eyes twinkled shrewdly.

"You never told me how you made your start, Sam," John said, taking advantage of his friend's reminiscent mood.

"Reckon I never would got started if I had tew depend on wages," reflected Sam. "Worked in er shop in Providence fer three years an' saved up er hundred dollars. Then dad died an' left me part of ther old farm. I sold out fer six hundred. Went up ter Vermont and bought some hosses an' brought 'em back an' sold 'em. As I said, I knows a horse better'n he knows hisself. Then I kept on buyin' an' sellin' 'em. When I had enough money I bought that air strip of land I own now, and I've been thare ever since. Good land fer hosses, an' that's all 'tis good fer. I've got er hundred head of good road hosses and four er five trotters, an' as many runnin' hosses. I've been down

ter New York, lookin' it over, an' have erbout decided ter locate thare. That's er great town, John, an' I knows more erbout hosses than most on 'em down that-a-way. What dew ye think erbout it, John? Dew ye think I'd better try it, er let well-enough alone? They say, ye know, as heow er rollin' stone gathers no moss, but I don't want ter get mossy. Rollin' 'round sorter polishes ye up, and makes ye smooth, an' I don't go much on proverbs, noheow. What do ye think erbout it, John?"

Sam looked anxiously into the face of his friend.

"I should go," said John Burt decisively. "There's a fortune waiting for you in New York, Sam. Go, by all means."

This settled it with Sam. A month after the Segregansett sailed away with John Burt, a Providence steamer carried Sam Rounds and fifty carefully selected horses to New York. Since the death of his father Sam had provided for his mother, who lived with him in a well-built house on his Hingham stock farm. Next to his horses his great mission in life was to restrain this estimable woman from working. Like others of her class she was born with her feet on the treadmill, and when Sam shattered that instrument of torture Mrs. Rounds was first dismayed and then dazed. Life without a ceaseless round of exhausting toil was something beyond her comprehension.

Mrs. Rounds was a faded little woman who had reached her threescore of years. She looked frail, but was seemingly incapable of physical fatigue. She had reared a family of ten children, and for more than forty years had averaged sixteen hours of work a day. Her girlhood was spent in a factory, and her honeymoon in a kitchen.

Her past was a blur of trouble and of toil. Crying children, with ever-recurring attacks of croup, measles and fevers, the heat and odors of a kitchen, six solid years of wash-days, cows milked morning and night, clothes fashioned and mended, floors swept, beds made, fruit preserved, apples dried, clothes to be hung on lines in the bitter cold of winter, school lunches prepared for the children, whippings administered, the occasional harsh temper of a husband to be appeased or endured—forty years of ceaseless labor and care, intensified at periods by the birth, illness and death of children, and crowned at last by the loss of the partner of her slavery—such had been the life-story of Mary Rounds.

When Sam was able to build a house he declared that it should be his mother's home. He registered a vow that she should do no more work. Mrs. Rounds had gone to live with one of her married daughters, and there Sam found her. Her position was that of a nurse and maid-of-all-work serving without pay or praise. She had taken on her bowed old shoulders the care of a second gen-

eration of Roundses. Four cross grandchildren, reinforced by newly-arrived and vociferous twins, had been confided to her care. At the age of sixty she had begun anew the harsher part of the task assumed at twenty. To the evident disgust of his sister, Sam bore the old lady triumphantly away. Mrs. Rounds had obeyed orders all her life, and Sam being the oldest of her children, she did not hesitate to acknowledge his authority.

"There's lots of work to do here, Samuel," said Mrs. Rounds, a shade of regret in her quiet voice when Sam delivered his ultimatum. "There's lots of work here, and Sallie isn't very strong"—the daughter referred to weighed one hundred and eighty pounds and had whipped the hired man—"but you know best, Samuel, an' I'll go with you." And she did.

The good old lady was astonished and a bit dismayed when she examined the modest house Sam had erected.

"This is a nice place," she said—pride of her son and hereditary caution struggling for mastery. "It must ha' cost a lot of money. I'm afraid you're reckless and extravagant, Samuel. That picket-fence, an' that there piazzer, and them green shutters must cost like everything. Don't be extravagant, Samuel. It's a besetting sin."

"There ain't no commandment agin it; leastwise I never saw none in the Bible," said Sam, who was a perpetual mystery to his mother. "To my

way of thinkin', extravagance is erbout the only thing worth livin' fer. I aims ter be the most extravagant chap ever turned outer Rocky Woods."

The reproving look on his mother's face vanished when Sam threw his strong arms around her and kissed her with a resounding smack. They entered the house, and Sam escorted his mother to a cozy room and told her that it was her own. She looked at the tasteful furniture, the snowy linen, the bright rugs, and the pictures, and tears stood in her eyes.

"This is too good for me, Samuel," she said, holding his hands and looking fondly into his eyes. "But you must be hungry. I'll change my dress and get dinner. Where's the kitchen, Samuel?"

"Never mind erbout the kitchen," said Sam. "There ain't no kitchen fer you. Dinner's all ready, anyhow. Come on, Ma Rounds. I'll show ye the cutest dinin'-room ye ever sot yer eyes on."

It was a pretty dining-room. A broad bay window, framed with morning glories, looked out on a well-kept lawn. An oaken sideboard, with heavy brass trimmings and a French-plate mirror, was resplendent with silverware. The table was decorated with flowers, and the table linen was flawless. To the old farmwife these modest comforts realized her dreams of prodigality. With the exception of Squire Walker, no farmer near or in Rehoboth owned a house with a dining-room separated from a kitchen.

Sam touched a bell, and a trim, white-aproned maid responded. She placed a tureen in front of the master of the house, and moved noiselessly away. Mrs. Rounds gazed searchingly, first at the young woman and then at Sam. She said nothing, however, but bowing her head offered a fervent blessing, which was more of a prayer than the usual formal invocation.

"Seems like old times tew have you offer a blessin'," said Sam, as he served his mother a portion of the savory soup. "I must tell you erbout old man Carter, down tew Hingham—the head of the firm of Carter & Company. He's a great business man, an' shrewder'n a mink. A while ago he got religion an' joined the Methodist church. The other day he asked the preacher tew dinner, an' when they was all sot down he motioned ther preacher tew ask a blessin'."

"'You ask a blessin', Brother Carter,' said the preacher, who wasn't any too sure that the new convert was really saved.

"This sorter staggered old Carter for a minute, but he's game as a pebble. He never had asked a blessin', but he was a good business man and great on correspondence, an' he warn't afraid. An' here is what he said:

"'Thankin' Thee, O Lord, for this food and for Thy many blessings, we remain, very respectfully, yours.'"

"You made that story up, Samuel," said Mrs.

Rounds, who could not repress a smile. "Who is that woman?" she asked in a whisper.

"Her name is Mrs. Fletcher. She's the housekeeper here. She's a widow lady, an' a mighty good woman."

"Of course you'll let her go now," his mother said, when the housekeeper had served a roast of lamb, a dish of green peas, browned potatoes and some tender cabbage. "I can do the cookin' an' all the work here now. What do you pay her, Samuel?"

"Seven dollars a—a month," said Sam, who preferred the falsehood rather than the confession of the appalling truth that Mrs. Fletcher received that amount per week. "She's an awful good cook, Ma."

Sam loved his mother, but ten years of life away from the old farm, with frequent sojourns in hotels in Boston, Newport, New York, and other centers of civilization, had dulled his appreciation of the Rehoboth cuisine. He yet retained a vivid recollection of occasional beefsteaks, thin cut from an aged and recently slaughtered cow, fried with a piece of tallow, until the product resembled in taste and texture the hide of that unfortunate animal.

He recalled the winter breakfasts of dried herrings, greasy fried potatoes, and bread without butter, the latter being served only on rare occasions—it having a market value. He could still taste and smell those herrings. Strung through

the eyes on willow rods, hundreds of them hung under the roof in the cramped and dusty old attic, keeping company with hair trunks, broken spinning-wheels, mink and fox pelts, and the jumbled wreckage of four generations of Roundses.

The perennial table luxuries were pies and doughnuts, apple and rhubarb pies in summer, and dried-apple pies in winter—with doughnuts forever, breakfast, dinner and supper. The kettle of lard in which they were fried was as much of a fixture as was the old well with its sweep and its cold, slimy bucket. Fresh fish were unknown, and dried codfish was a tempting rarity. Once a year, in "hog-killing time," the family revelled for three or four days in fresh pork. No culinary crime can entirely destroy the flavor of newly-killed pork. The choicer parts were sent to market, and the meaner salted down, to be resurrected from the brine at intervals in the monotony of dried herrings and corned beef. No escaped victim of New England farm fare and cooking of a generation ago ever indited verse or prose to its praise.

"Seven dollars a month and her keep," mused Mrs. Rounds. "That would be as much as twelve dollars a month, or one hundred and fifty dollars a year, Samuel. We can save all that. Let her go at once, Samuel, and I will do the work."

"You'll do nothin', Ma Rounds," said Sam decidedly. "You've worked nigh onto fifty years, an' that's enough. Now, I'm go'in ter dew ther

work, an' you're goin' ter dew ther playin' an' restin'. Of course you can sew an' boss ther girl an' putter 'round like, but you must keep outer ther kitchen, an' fergit that brooms ever was made. Don't you worry erbout money. I've got enough money ter keep both on us er hundred years, an' I'm goin' ter have more."

The good old mother made a feeble protest, but Sam would not listen to her. For a week Sam remained home and kept a close watch on her, and congratulated himself on the success of his plans. Once he caught her scrubbing the front steps, and on another occasion she was detected chopping kindling-wood, both of which tasks she postponed on Sam's protest. He introduced his mother to the neighbors, and they all liked the kindly-faced old lady and welcomed her to the neighborhood.

Sam took his mother to Boston and superintended the purchase of dress materials, a bonnet, and various articles of apparel. On this occasion he was guilty of a scheme of deception which filled his soul with joy. He was acquainted with Mr. Farnsworth, the merchant, and calling him aside said:

"I want you tew wait on mother an' me, yerself, Mr. Farnsworth. Mother is the best woman in ther world, but she thinks I'm extravagant, an' I wouldn't hurt her feelins fer anything. Now, I tell ye what ye can dew. When she picks out a cheap thing, you multiply the price by four er five, an'

when ye show her somethin' bang-up an' good enough fer a princess, put ther price way down. D'ye understand? An' when we gets through, give me the true bill and show her the other one, an' I'll make it all right fer yer trouble. An' mind ye, I want the best in ther store fer Mother Rounds."

The merchant smilingly agreed to this arrangement and entered heartily into the deception. Mrs. Rounds had never been in Boston until that day, although all her life had been spent within an hour's ride from the New England metropolis. Occasional visits to the dry-goods shops of Taunton formed epochs in her life, and she was dazed at the contemplation of the sight before her. The shelves, with their loads of fabrics, seemed endless, and she crouched behind a marble column for fear of being in the way of the chattering, laughing throng of shoppers.

Reassured by the cordial manner of the proprietor, she was escorted to a counter. No stress of poverty nor strain of heredity can entirely efface from the heart of a woman her love for personal adornment and her zest for bargaining. This was before the day of fixed prices, and shopping was then as much a contest between buyer and seller as was the trading of land or swapping of horses.

"I don't want much, Samuel," she whispered, as Mr. Farnsworth turned to take down a bolt of

dress goods. "We must be economical, Samuel. Tell him to show us some ginghams."

"All right, Ma Rounds; watch me beat him down," returned Sam, nudging her gently with his elbow.

"Here is a stylish pattern, Mrs. Rounds," said Mr. Farnsworth, displaying a neat gingham, worth perhaps ten cents a yard.

"How much a yard?" asked Sam.

Mr. Farnsworth gravely consulted the cabalistic price mark.

"The regular price is ninety-five cents a yard, but," lowering his voice, and glancing about to make sure he was not overheard, "I will make it to you at eighty cents."

"Eighty cents a yard for gingham!" gasped Mrs. Rounds.

"It's imported goods, Mrs. Rounds," explained Mr. Farnsworth, critically stroking the print. "It wears like silk. We carry no domestic ginghams. Here is one at eighty-five cents, and this one is a dollar and ten a yard. That would make you a fine gown, Mrs. Rounds."

"Let's go somewhere else, Samuel," whispered his mother, positively frightened. "I can buy gingham in Taunton for eight cents a yard."

"Wait a bit," said Sam, reassuringly. "What have ye got in silks, Mr. Farnsworth?"

"We have a fine line of silks," replied that gentleman, leading the way to another counter. "I

should recommend a heavy black gros grain silk for Mrs. Rounds. We have them at all prices. Here is one at a dollar and a half a yard."

He displayed a silk worth at least three dollars a yard. The old lady looked fondly at the glossy fabric. The temptation was great, but she closed her lips firmly and put Satan behind her.

"Too much," said Sam decisively. "We're not rich ner proud, Mr. Farnsworth. Show us somethin' cheaper."

"Very well. Here is one at a dollar a yard, and here is one which *is* a bargain." He unrolled a superb, heavy bolt of silk, lustrous black and a delight to the eye. He examined the price mark critically. It told him that the wholesale cost was four dollars a yard and the upset retail figure four dollars and seventy-five cents.

"I can let you have that at eighty cents a yard," he said after a mental calculation.

"Now ye're gittin' down tew business," Sam declared tentatively. "That's tew much, but it's more like it. What do you think of the goods, Ma Rounds? You'd look like a four-year old in a gown made of that."

"It's very fine—too fine for me, I'm afraid." She was weakening. "And it's cheap, if it's real silk. Is it really and truly silk?" She looked timidly at Mr. Farnsworth, who assured her it was silk beyond a doubt.

"Tell ye what we'll dew," said Sam. "How

many yards does it take fer a dress? Fifteen? All right. We'll give ye sixty cents a yard—cash. Sixty cents. That will leave ye a good profit. What d'ye say, Mr. Farnsworth? Is it a bargain?"

"Impossible," returned that gentleman, again consulting the price mark. "I'll make it sixty-seven cents, and you can take it or leave it alone."

Sam took his mother aside.

"What d'ye say, ma? You know more erbout silks 'an I do."

"It's awful cheap, Samuel," she said weakly. "I never heard of silk at such a price. But it's too good for me. Let's go somewhere else and get a gingham or some half-wool goods." But there was no insistence in her voice. The sheen of the silk had dazzled her eyes.

"Nothin's tew good fer you," said Sam affectionately. He turned to Mr. Farnsworth.

"Mother says she can't afford to pay more'n sixty-five cents a yard," he said.

"All right," groaned the merchant. "It eaves me nothing, but I'll do it as a favor. Of course you want some black lace for trimmings?"

"Sure," replied Sam.

"Something about twenty-five cents a yard," suggested Mrs. Rounds. She felt like one who, having fallen from grace, decides to go to perdition with flying colors. No one in Rehoboth ever had possessed a black silk gown with lace trimmings.

"Here is something at thirty cents a yard which I can honestly recommend," said Mr. Farnsworth. He gave Sam a signal that it was the best article in stock, and, though the latter had little knowledge or appreciation of lace, he admired the delicate and intricate pattern. After inspecting cheaper qualities, on which Mr. Farnsworth fixed higher prices, Mrs. Rounds consented to the purchase of eight yards, though Mr. Farnsworth advised ten.

Delighted beyond measure over the success of his villainy, the deceitful Sam and his fellow-conspirator lured Mrs. Rounds into the purchase of a black-and-white cashmere dress. The purchase price was four-and-a-half dollars, but Sam settled privately at twenty-six.

Sam's crowning triumph was the purchase of a black lace shawl, listed at one hundred and fifty dollars. After ten minutes of dickering with Mr. Farnsworth, Sam succeeded in acquiring that treasure for $11.25. Likewise he bought a twenty-five dollar bonnet for three-and-a-half dollars. Handkerchiefs, stockings, petticoats and shoes fell into Sam's hands at ridiculous prices, until his mother, with tears in her eyes, declared that she would not consent to the purchase of another article.

Mr. Farnsworth presented an itemized bill for $47.27, which Sam paid from a generous roll of greenbacks. On the plea of arranging for expressing the goods to Hingham, Sam met Mr. Farns-

worth in his office and gave him a check for the balance of $445.50.

"I swan, I havn't had so much fun in ten years," said Sam, as he shook hands with Mr. Farnsworth and thanked him. "I reckon Ma Rounds will be the best-dressed old lady between Boston an' Newport. If the Recordin' Angel keeps track of all ther lies as is told down here below, I reckon we've kept him pretty fairly middlin' busy this mornin'. Good-day, Mr, Farnsworth, an' good luck ter you. I've got another team of rattlin' good road hosses fer ye, an' when ye gits time tew run down tew Hingham I'll show 'em tew ye. Good-day."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

SAM'S NEW YORK TRIUMPHS

IGNORING his mother's protest, Sam employed a dressmaker and for two weeks Mrs. Rounds found pleasure in assisting the seamstress with her work. Sam had acquainted the latter with his secret, and she agreed to protect it. But his precautions were in vain.

Sam was compelled to make a business trip to Springfield. During his absence a married daughter, who lived in Boston, called and persuaded Mrs. Rounds to spend Sunday with her. The black silk dress was almost finished. It was a glorious creation, but the dressmaker's plans called for two extra yards of lace. Sam had liberally supplied his mother with money, and after a mental struggle she decided to squander sixty cents for the necessary two yards of lace.

On Monday morning her daughter escorted Mrs. Rounds to the dry-goods establishment. She had a small sample of the lace, but looked in vain for Mr. Farnsworth. A clerk stated that Mr. Farnsworth was busy, and offered to wait on her. He quickly matched the lace, measured off two yards and Mrs. Rounds tendered him a one dollar bill.

"It is ten dollars, madam; five dollars a yard," said the polite clerk.

"Five dollars a yard!" The little woman looked at the clerk with staring eyes. "Mr. Farns-

worth only charged me thirty cents a yard. There he is now. Ask him, and he'll tell you so."

"He's trying to cheat you, ma," whispered the daughter as Mr. Farnsworth approached. He recognized Mrs. Rounds and greeted her pleasantly.

"Your clerk says this lace is five dollars a yard, and you charged me only thirty cents," said Mrs. Rounds timidly.

"How could you make such a mistake?" demanded Mr. Farnsworth with a meaning glance at his employe. "I will wait on this lady. He is a new clerk, madame, and not familiar with our price marks," he explained to Mrs. Rounds as the puzzled young man bowed and turned away. "Thirty cents is right, Mrs. Rounds. Never mind the money; I'll charge it to your son's account. How is Mr. Rounds? He's a boy to be proud of. Is there anything else you need? Always ask for me when you call; I shall be delighted to serve you. Good day, ladies."

But like other crimes less difficult to condone, this one was destined to be revealed. The preacher's wife let "the cat out of the bag," as Sam declared. She called on Mrs. Rounds, and since they had become very friendly, was shown the new gown and the black lace shawl, Whatever of envy arose in that good woman's breast was lost in surprise when Mrs. Rounds innocently mentioned the price she had paid for the silk.

"Sixty-five cents a yard for that silk!" she

exclaimed. "Why, my dear Mrs. Rounds, you surely must be jesting. I had a dress like that when I was married and it cost six dollars a yard. And that lace at thirty cents! It surely cost five dollars a yard, and perhaps more. Farnsworth & Company handle no laces worth less than three dollars. That beautiful shawl must have cost more than a hundred dollars. I understand now," she continued in some confusion. "Your son intended to surprise you. It was very good of him and very clumsy in me to reveal his secret."

When the visitor had departed, Mrs. Rounds was still bewildered. She looked with awe at the garments spread out before her. She recalled the interview with Mr. Farnsworth. The clerk was right; the preacher's wife was right.

A familiar step sounded in the hallway, and Sam entered, his homely face rosy with a smile.

"I'm back ergain," he said, fondly embracing his mother. "Admirin' yer new gown, eh? Go an' put it on, an' yer bonnet an' shawl. I want ter see how ye looks, dressed up as er real lady."

She held his hands and looked up, tears trickling down her faded cheeks.

"You—you told me an awful story, Samuel," she faltered, "but—but I don't think you meant to do wrong, and—and I'll pray for you. You are very good to me, Samuel, if you did break one of the commandments."

"That didn't break no commandment," said

Sam with a contrite grin, "it only kinder bent it er little. Them sorter fibs don't count. Don't ye worry erbout ther cost of them clothes. I've made enough money since I've been away ter pay fer three more dresses like that air one. It's none tew good fer ye, an' I want ye to wear it just as if ye wa'nt afraid of it."

Despite this injunction, the silk dress and lace shawl saw the light only on Sundays or on such state occasions as funerals and weddings. Being a woman, Mrs. Rounds's appreciation of these treasures naturally was enhanced by a knowledge of their cost.

Sam's rapidly increasing business kept him away from home much of the time. Mrs. Rounds was busy for a month with her wardrobe. She then knitted socks for Sam, until he had a supply sufficient to last a lifetime. This task completed, she effected a compromise with the housekeeper, by the terms of which she was permitted to dust the rooms and make the beds. In this crisis of a dearth of work, the wife of a neighbor was taken ill with typhoid fever. There were five small children in the family, and they were too poor to employ a nurse.

An hour after Mrs. Rounds heard the news she had taken charge of the case. Sam was away, and the housekeeper was powerless to restrain her. Hour after hour and day after day she fought the attacks of the insidious disease. She cooked the meals, soothed the crying children, spoke words of

comfort to the distracted husband, performed the housework, and slept at such rare intervals as she could find between her multitudinous duties. The patient was convalescent when Sam returned home. He at once employed a nurse to take his mother's place.

She listened patiently and with a puzzled smile to Sam's rebuking lecture.

"When folks are sick, some one must take care of them, Samuel," she said, when he had ended. "They are poor, and I had nothing else to do. The Bible says you must visit the sick when they're afflicted. You won't let me do any work here in the house, and I must do something."

"Read, an' ride, an' rest, an' take things easy," said Sam, who saw his plans crumbling before his eyes. He was unable to exact any promise from his mother, although he had his way as long as he remained at home.

Mrs. Rounds was the first to learn of sickness or of trouble in any family for miles around, and first to respond. She officiated at childbirths, or with tender fingers closed the eyes of the dead and stitched their shrouds. When children had croup or measles, the neighbors sent, not for the doctor, but for Mrs. Rounds. She found relaxation in sewing for any one who would accept her services.

She seemed to grow younger despite these activities, and Sam finally accepted the inevitable. Of the liberal allowance of money which he gave

her, Mrs. Rounds spent little, and most of that went for medicine and clothes for neighbors who could not afford such expenditures. The remainder was stored away against that "rainy day" made inevitable by Sam's recklessness and extravagance, as she saw it.

A woman with a heart more kind and a nature more generous never lived, but she regarded money with a sentiment which was almost veneration. For generations there had been a money famine in her family. She could imagine of no way to accumulate money other than by hoarding it. The crisp new bills which Sam showered into her hands broke a drought which had been transmitted from her ancestors. When the first one hundred dollars had been accumulated, she counted it over again and again, like one in a dream. It represented affluence and independence. She gazed at it, not as a miser, but like one who has come into a glorious and unexpected heritage. She showed her treasure to Sam.

"Why don't yer spend it, Ma Rounds?" asked that philosopher. "That's what money's fer. Buy somethin' with it. Here's another hundred, all in one bill," he said, extracting a yellow note from a bulky pocketbook, and handing it to his mother. "We're goin' tew New York before long, an' you must git used tew spendin money. Go tew Boston an' practice an' git yer hand in."

Mrs. Rounds considered this one hundred dol-

lar bill as so much money saved from the approaching wreck of Sam's fortunes. She bought a pew in the little country church for eight dollars, and experienced a keen thrill of delight when she gave five dollars to the foreign missionary fund. She purchased a pair of crutches for the crippled child of a neighbor, and stored the rest away, adding to it from time to time as Sam gave her money. She could hardly believe her eyes when her funds counted up to five hundred dollars.

Sam made several successful ventures in the New York horse market, and decided to locate there. He bought a cozy house on the East Side, fronting a small park, and installed his mother as mistress of the establishment. His business prospered. Having firmly established his position as a shipper and dealer in horses, he turned his attention to the commission business. Taking advantage of a shortage in the cranberry crop, he bought a large part of the available supply and cleared thousands of dollars in consequence of his sagacity. He then embarked in the produce and commission business on a large scale and scored another success.

Sam Rounds combined traits seldom found in one individual. He was a shrewd business man, quick to take a commercial advantage, but rigidly honest. He was liberal almost to a fault. The poor for blocks around became recipients of his bounty. In the long years marked by business and

financial depression which followed his advent in New York, he distributed thousands of dollars' worth of provisions among the poverty-stricken people of his neighborhood. He perfected an arrangement with other produce merchants by which uncalled for perishable stock was thus disposed.

Sam had a kind word and a joke for every one, and became generally popular. In the dead of winter he rented an old building on the East Side, and made it a distributing point for provisions contributed by himself and by his competitors. Mrs. Rounds was delighted when she found that this gave full sway to her activities. She hunted up those deserving poor who were too proud to appeal for aid. The supply of sick children and troubled mothers was inexhaustible, and time no longer hung heavily on her hands. She still clung to her money and steadily added to it, but she fully endorsed Sam's liberality in the matter of provisions.

"They will not keep," she explained to herself, "and money will."

It was a picture to watch Sam Rounds superintending the distribution of potatoes, carrots, cabbages, fish and other food forwarded to the East Side headquarters.

"Help yourself," he said to an old couple who entered from the long line in waiting. "Those ain't ther best potatoes in ther market, but they're

pretty fairly middlin' good. They remind me of old Uncle Toby Haines, who lived down East, whar I cum from. They say as heow every man is as lazy as he dares tew be, an' I reckon Uncle Toby Haines was ther most courageous man that ever lived. He wouldn't do nothin'. Once I went tew his house in winter time an' found him in bed, covered with a fish-net.

"'What ye got that fish net over yer fer?' I asked him. 'That won't keep ye warm,' I sed.

"'Wall,' he sed, as he rolled over an' yawned, 'I reckon it keeps out ther coarsest part of ther cold.'"

"It's ther same with ther potatoes an' things," laughed Sam, slipping a two dollar bill into the old woman's hand. "They ain't ther best in ther world, but they're good an' fillin', an' will stop ther coarsest part of ther hunger. Don't be afraid on 'em. Take all ye want—ther's two carloads more comin'."

At the age of thirty-five, having amassed a competency, Sam Rounds determined to improve what he termed his "book education." Four winter terms in the Rehoboth public school gave him all of which he could boast in the way of erudition. He therefore began a course of study in a night school, which he attended four evenings in the week. He joined a debating society, and became a member of various social and political organizations in his district.

The next instant a bearded face appeared from the folds of a heavy fur overcoat.

The corruption of the local politicians precipitated a revolt against the party in power, and the voter's of Sam's district held a meeting for the purpose of nominating an alderman to stand against an incumbent who had betrayed his trust. Sam's name was proposed with cheers. He was nominated by acclamation, and escorted to the platform.

No introduction was necessary. Nearly every man in the room knew and respected the homely, awkward, freckled and red-haired man who stood before them. Hundreds of them had reason to remember his generosity. Embarrassed for a moment, Sam regained his self-possession and made a speech direct and simple in its rude eloquence. It was singularly free from the idioms which characterized his conversation, and while purists might have criticised his grammar, he held the rapt attention of his hearers, who punctuated his sentences with applause.

"If honesty is good policy in business, as they say it is," he declared, "it should be a good thing in politics. Those who know me, know that I'm not a politician, and those that don't know me will mighty soon find it out. The only promise I can make is that if I am elected—and I calculate to be—is that I would no sooner think of cheating my neighbors as an alderman, than I would of cheating them in selling potatoes or cabbages."

Samuel Lemuel Rounds was triumphantly elected alderman by the largest majority ever cast for a candidate in his district.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

LOST IN THE SNOW

"LOOKS like more snow!"

At the sound of his master's voice a shepherd dog raised his head inquiringly, and followed the gaze of the speaker as he studied the leaden sky and the crests of snowclad ridges and mountains. This habit of voicing thought develops in those who spend long periods in solitude, and James Blake—once a farmer boy in Hingham, and now a California gold miner and prospector—was no exception to the rule.

"We are surely going to have another snowstorm, old dog," continued Blake, as he plunged his head into a basin of ice-cold water, dipped from a mountain brook which brawled noisily a few rods away. "Let 'er snow, eh, Dog! We were here first, warn't we? It won't snow in the tunnel, will it, old fellow?" And he laughingly slapped the dog with the towel, and shoved him into a snowbank as he leaped towards him.

"Are you hungry, Dog? Ready for breakfast, eh? How about a chunk of deer meat? Have it cooked or raw? Raw, did you say? Speak up, Dog! Speak up for your breakfast!"

Thus appealed to, the big shepherd emitted a yelp of entreaty which echoed and re-echoed from hill to rock until the rarified air resounded with a howling chorus. An encircling pack of wolves could not have raised a louder or more menacing

din. Blake laughed and cuffed his canine friend, and then turned to his cabin, pausing to survey the valley which spread out two thousand feet below him.

At that moment the rising sun flamed through a rift in the clouds. Broad splashes of light flashed on the white peaks to the west, and a stray shaft burned through the mist into the valley. The winding river and the pine-girt lake turned into gleaming silver. The trees, with their burdens of snow, glittered like diamonds. To the south the blue-black shadow of Bear Peak wrapped all below in gloom.

But the brightness was transient. A gray curtain was slowly drawn over the distant range to the west—an advancing mantle of swirling snow. The light faded from the valley, and died on the beetling heights. As Blake watched, the gray fingers of the clouds blurred the farther rim of the valley, and the pines above his head soughed in the first breath of the nearing storm. A few large flakes fluttered softly down.

"Let's get breakfast, Dog," he said as he entered the cabin. "I told you it was going to snow."

Blake's cabin stood well back from the edge of a cliff half way up the slope of a valley in the Sierra Nevadas of central California. In the late autumn he had hewn the logs and constructed his mountain home. A few yards away a mound of red dirt and fractured rocks marked the mouth of a tunnel,

which represented his faith in that fickle fortune whom gold seekers worship. The edge of the cliff, for a mile or more, formed a natural trail which opened into the valley. Four or five thousand feet above the roof of the cabin rose a dome of perpetual snow, pierced by bare ledges of rock. The mountain torrent which tumbled past his door hurled itself over the cliff and fell in mist and spray hundreds of feet below.

The interior of the cabin was of a type familiar to miners and mountaineers. The floor was of beaten clay, hard as brick. In one corner was a bed with a mattress of fir boughs, covered with blankets, and with a bear skin—this last by way of counterpane. The walls were decorated with skins and hides; the splendid pelt of a grizzly bear occupying the place of honor. A cooking stove and an assortment of skillets, tin plates and pans filled the side of the hut opposite the bed, while in the center of the room stood a rude table with a raised log serving as a chair.

Scattered along the walls were mining tools, powder kegs, guns, fishing rods, and a miscellaneous assortment of lumber and firewood. A small but strongly-constructed ell was used as a storeroom. Haunches of venison, the carcass of a brown bear, and long strings of mountain trout were here securely guarded against the depredations of wandering animals. Bags of flour and oatmeal, some potatoes, sides of bacon, and the remnants of a ham

completed the more substantial portion of Blake's larder. He often surveyed his snug storeroom with much satisfaction. Nothing but a conflagration or a serious illness could disturb his labors during the long winter season. The brook gave him water; the forest supplied firewood; his work sharpened his appetite, and the dog was an appreciative guest and a loyal companion. And in the bowels of the earth, in the direction of that long black tunnel was gold, gold, gold—awaiting the impact of a pick swung by his brawny arms.

Breakfast ended, James Blake lit his pipe and started for the mouth of the tunnel. The dog followed him. This faithful animal had whined at the door of the cabin one stormy night, and the lonely miner had welcomed him. Blake gave him no name other than Dog, and he seemed proud of the title.

Though less than an hour had passed since Blake entered the cabin, the snow already had drifted across the path and blocked the door. Those whose knowledge of snowstorms is confined to localities where a foot or two of snow in forty-eight hours is called a "blizzard," and esteemed a meteorological event, have no conception of a snowstorm in the Sierras. In Vermont, famous for snowfalls, an inch an hour constitutes a heavy storm. But when the warm vapor from the Pacific is driven inland, until the crests of the "Snowy Mountains" stand as a cold barrier against its progress, the pre-

cipitation is many times greater. In summer, cloud-bursts sweep solid rocks down the mountain-sides; in winter, the swirling flakes smother the air. Near the timber line in the Sierra Nevadas there has been recorded a fall of fourteen feet of snow in as many consecutive hours—an inch every five minutes—a swirling, writhing, choking maelstrom of flakes, borne on the wings of a freezing gale.

It was such a storm that Blake faced when he opened the cabin door and plunged through the drifts into the tunnel.

"This is an old snifter, isn't it, Dog?" he exclaimed as he stood in the mouth of the shaft and shook the snow from his blouse. "No rabbits or chipmunks to-day, eh, Dog!"

Blake lit a lantern, and wormed his way into the dismal hole. A few minutes later he was hard at work, pausing now and then to examine the rock with eager eyes. He had been toiling for three hours or more when the dog's sniffling attracted his notice. As he turned, the animal raised his head, barked sharply, and growled in a peculiar manner.

"What's the matter, Dog!" said Blake, patting his friend. "What a cursed shame the creature can't talk! What's up, old boy? Seen a bear? Don't bother with him—let him alone. Go away, Dog, I'm busy," and Blake returned to his task.

Leaning back against the wall of the tunnel, with his paws hanging in a most doleful fashion, the dog sounded a long-drawn wail, so pitiful in its

intensity that Blake dropped his pick and gazed at the animal in amazement mixed with terror. The animal sprang forward and fastened his teeth in the leg of Blake's trousers, pulling gently but firmly, growling and whining.

"This is a new freak!" muttered Blake, grabbing the lantern. "Something has happened. Perhaps the hut's afire."

He moved quickly towards the mouth of the tunnel. The dog gave a joyful bark and led the way. Blake reached the open air, and floundered through the drifts until the cabin was visible through the blinding snow. The dog went past it, and howled dismally when his master paused. Rushing into the hut, Blake secured a long rope, one end of which he tied to the leg of a bench near the door. Paying out the coil, he dashed sturdily forward. He had no difficulty in keeping up with the dog, who was half buried in his struggles.

Two hundred feet from the house the dog paused and sniffed the air. Then, with a yelp, he plunged to the right, made for a rock which showed dim through the snow, and burrowed frantically into a drift on its leeward side. In the white mass Blake saw a dark object, and as he reached the rock it moved. The next instant a bearded face appeared from the folds of a heavy fur overcoat, and a man struggled unsteadily to his feet.

"Can you walk?" shouted Blake grasping him by the arm. The man was dazed, but full of pluck.

"I think so," said the stranger, as he grasped the rope. "How far is it?"

"Not far," replied Blake encouragingly. "Pull on the rope. It will help you."

Once in the cabin, the stranger seated himself near the stove, while Blake produced a flask and heaped fuel on the fire.

"Keep your hands and feet away from the stove, if they are frozen," cautioned Blake. "Thawing them out by putting them in the snow is the best way."

"I'm not frost-bitten," was the stranger's reply, as he clapped his hands vigorously and pinched his ears. "I was completely done for, and took shelter behind that rock, which was the only place I could find. If you hadn't found me when you did," he said with much feeling, as he extended his hand, "I should never have left there alive!"

At the sound of the man's voice James Blake started and gazed intently at him. When the bearded stranger raised his eyes and offered his hand the recognition was complete.

"John Burt, or I'm a ghost!" Don't you know me, John?"

"Jim Blake!"

The New Englander is not demonstrative in his emotions or affections, but the joy which danced in the eyes of these reunited friends as they shook hands and slapped each other on the back was more eloquent than words. The dog yelped in sym-

pathy, and the storm with a wilder shriek raged at the escape of its prey.

"This seems too good to be true, Jim!" exclaimed John, his hand on Jim's shoulder. "But for you, old chum, my California experience would have been ended. How small the world is, that we should meet here, of all places on earth!"

"Take off your clothes and get into bed, John," directed Blake, as he pushed John into a chair and tugged at his frozen boots. "Do as I tell you, and you'll be all right. When you are warm and rested, I'll give you a suit of dry clothes. In the meantime I'll cook you a dinner that'll make you glad you are alive. I'm running this hotel, and guests do as they are told or get out!"

"I shall obey orders," said John, as a blast shook the hut and a pine tree crashed to the rocks. "I'm all right, Jim, but dry clothes won't hurt me, and your bed looks inviting."

"You mustn't go to sleep; it's not safe, after exposure," cautioned Blake, as he wrapped the blankets around John Burt. "Take another pull at that flask, old man, and lie there and watch the best cook in the Sierra Nevadas prepare a dinner that will make your hair curl. Lie quiet and rest. Don't talk, but keep awake."

Several times, during the next two hours, John fell into a drowse, but by force of will he roused himself. The reaction after the awful struggle in the drifts was severe, but he mastered it and was

himself again. Blake exhausted the resources of his larder in a dinner which John enjoyed as never before in his life, and Dog did not go hungry.

Then pipes were produced, and, seated near the red-hot stove, the two friends recounted some of the events which had marked their lives during the preceding six years. It seemed ages to both of them. The striplings of seventeen were now stalwart men.

James Blake, at twenty-two, was strikingly handsome. Manhood had generously developed the graces of face and figure which compel the admiration of a friend and entrance the eye of a woman. Wavy black hair clustered above a well-shaped forehead. His eyes were large, dark and magnetic; his nose bold, but perfectly formed; his chin square and powerfully molded. It was impossible to resist Blake's smile, and his laugh was wholesome and contagious. Clean limbed, broad shouldered, graceful, active and muscular, he stood six feet tall and looked every inch a manly, generous and chivalrous Apollo.

John Burt was lacking in that physical exactness which distinguished his boyhood companion, though he too would have been a commanding figure in any assemblage. But he possessed something that Blake lacked. When the other looked into John Burt's eyes and heard the calm, even accents of his voice, he felt himself in the presence of a dominating influence, and realized that the

years had not torn the scepter of leadership from the hands of the boy he once loved to follow.

And Blake was glad to reaffirm his allegiance to John Burt. He tendered it silently and without loss of self respect, and John Burt accepted it intuitively, without a shade of arrogance.

Blake listened eagerly to his friend's recital of the events leading up to the quarrel with Arthur Morris. John told of his studies in the old farmhouse, and of his admission to Harvard. He spoke of meeting Miss Carden at the Bishops', but made no mention of the runaway accident that served to renew their childhood acquaintance. He told of escorting Jessie to the clambake, of Morris' condition and conduct when he arrived from the Voltaire, and of the sail with Jessie in John's catboat, the Standish.

John said nothing of his avowal of love on that occasion, but Blake was not slow to note the change in his voice and the expression of his eyes when he referred to Jessie Carden. Jim clenched his hands and leaned excitedly forward when John told of the struggle with Morris in the old tavern. John then described the interview with Peter Burt, the old man's advice, the night ride to New Bedford, and the long voyage of the Segregansett. Blake had listened breathlessly.

"I have sometimes thought," said John, "that I should have remained and faced the charge of murder which might have been made against me.

That was my first impulse. I did not kill Morris, and it is only by chance that he did not kill me. The revolver was still in his hand when he fell, though I had bent his wrist so that he could not turn it against me. It was one of those new self-cocking weapons and Morris shot himself. But I had no witnesses, and Grandfather Burt and—and others advised me to put myself beyond the reach of a prosecution in which all the money and influence would have been against me."

"Your granddad was right," asserted Blake with prompt fervor. "Your future would have been ruined had you stayed there and stacked up against those millionaires. California is full of men who really are murderers, and most of them seem to be getting rich. You are innocent, your conscience is clear, and you'll win out and go back if you want to. Then you can meet them as an equal. The old man's head is level. I remember him, John, and he always was a great man. But I can't place Miss Carden—Jessie, you said her name was. Did I ever see her, John?"

"I think not, Jim. You left before she visited with the Bishops. She was a child when you went away."

"Is she pretty, John?"

It may have been only a reflection from the ruddy flame that suddenly flared from the smouldering logs, but James Blake thought that John blushed when he asked the question.

"I should not call her pretty; I should describe her as beautiful," replied John, after a pause, as he looked into Jim's face.

"Then she's more than pretty," laughed Blake, grasping his friend's hand. "I congratulate you, old man, and wish you all kinds of success and joy. I only wish we had something here worthy to be drunk as a toast in her honor."

"I have no claim to congratulations," said John, releasing his friend's hand. "You have assumed too much from my narrative. But tell me of yourself, Jim. I have been doing all the talking, and have inspired you to most generous castle building in my behalf. Let me do as much for you. What have you done in California, and what has the Golden State done for you?"

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE SAILOR MINE

"IT would take me a week, John, to tell my experiences of the last five years," said Jim Blake, tossing another log into the fire. "Most of them would not interest you, some might amuse you, and others would make you mad. I've been rich three times, John, and in love twice—no, three times."

"How rich, and how badly in love?"

"My strokes of fortune and my love affairs are all jumbled together," explained Blake, laughing heartily. "You'll have a bad opinion of me, John, but I've reformed, and am going to lead a better life. I made my first strike on the Little Calaveras. Talk about luck! That was a funny thing. I broke my neck and discovered a gold mine and a sweetheart in doing it!"

"Broke your neck? Surely you're jesting!"

"It's a fact, just the same," asserted Blake, thoughtfully rubbing the back of his neck, which showed no signs of fracture. "I was a greenhorn then, and my prospecting expeditions were the joke of the old stagers. I bought a horse and a Mexican saddle, and prowled through all the mountains and foothills back of the Little Calaveras. One afternoon I was following a trail that skirted along the side of a mountain. It was near the upper edge of a slope about as steep as Doc Stevens' barn—you remember that barn, John? There's

a lot of woodchucks in those hills, and in burrowing around one of them loosened a rock, which came rolling down in my direction. My horse saw and heard it, and shied off the trail. It was like stepping off the ridge pole of a barn. The slope was covered with loose slate, which looked for all the world like shingles. He slid about twenty feet and then fell; and as he went my right foot went through the stirrup. He rolled over me, and we started down that slope. Sometimes I was on top, and sometimes he was on top.

"You can bet I was doing some lively thinking about that time," continued Blake. "Four or five hundred feet below I saw a thin row of trees, and I knew they marked the edge of a cliff. For some reason there's 'most always a fringe of trees at these jumping-off places. We were going like lightning. Just as we neared the edge the horse rolled over me again. As I came on top, I saw that we were going to pass between two small trees. A big rock slewed the horse around, and he went down head first. I grabbed at a tree, and by the merest chance threw my free leg around it. I held like grim death to a coon, and heard the leather snap as the horse went over the precipice. If it had been a first-class saddle I wouldn't be here to tell the tale. I was hanging out over the cliff. It was eighteen hundred feet down to the first stopping place, and I saw that horse, all spraddled out, turn over and over in the air. I closed

my eyes so as not to see him strike. Then I crawled back a few feet and sat down behind a rock. That's the last thing I remember until I woke up in bed. An old doctor, whose breath smelled of liquor, was bending over me, and near him was one of the prettiest girls I ever saw. She and her father were approaching me when I started to slide down the mountain. Her name was Jenny Rogers."

Jim sighed and paused.

"This is growing romantic, but how about the broken neck?" asked John.

"It was broken, or dislocated, which is about the same thing," continued Blake. "Jenny's father knew of an old Spanish doctor, about forty miles away, and went for him. He was a wonder on bones. He was black as an Indian and uglier than sin. He felt around my neck, swore softly in Spanish, rolled me over on my face, climbed on my back, jabbed his knees into my shoulder blades, and grabbed me by the jaws. He gave my head a quick wrench. I saw a thousand skyrockets; something cracked and I became senseless. When I awoke he had my neck in splints, and was jabbering Spanish to Rogers. He said he was the only white man in the world who could set a broken neck, and I guess he was. He had learned the trick from an Indian medicine man. I met a learned medical sharp lately who said the old chap is what they call an 'osteopath'—a bone and muscle

specialist. He charged me twenty-five dollars, and told me to lie quiet for a week. Jenny Rogers nursed me, and of course I fell in love with her. I was in their cabin, and near by Mr. Rogers had located some valuable claims.

"Here is the most remarkable part of this story," Blake went on. "When I was able to dress I picked up that cursed Mexican stirrup to see how the leather happened to break. It was a steel affair, and I noticed some bright yellow spots in the crevices. Blamed if it wasn't gold! I didn't say a word, but when I was strong enough I went back and climbed slowly down the place where my horse fell. It was easy to follow it. Near the edge of the cliff I found an outcropping of gold-bearing ore, and the mark of where the metal part of my stirrup had scratched it. I staked out a claim and sold it to Jenny's father for a hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars. He's made two millions out of it. I made love to Jenny, and I think she would have had me, but I went to San Francisco and dropped the hundred and twenty-five thousand on the mining exchange. I went back and asked Jenny to wait until I made another fortune. She said she'd think about it. I guess she did. A year later she married a man who is now a United States Senator. So I broke my neck, lost my fortune and my sweetheart all in less than a year."

"And the second fortune?" questioned John, joining Jim in a laugh at his multiplied misfortunes.

"Then I made a strike on the Mariposa River. Sold my interest to an English syndicate for ninety-five thousand. I went to San Francisco and fell in love with Lucile Montrose. Did you ever see her, John? No? Well, you've heard of her, of course. She's an actress, or rather she was an actress. Ah, Lucile, Lucile! She was a dream, John. Such eyes, such pearly teeth and golden hair! And her voice was like—well, it was great. And I loved her and she loved me, and we were engaged to be married. I bought her diamond rings and sunbursts, and a carriage, and all kinds of things until my ninety-five thousand had dwindled to fifty thousand. I argued with myself that no such sum of money was sufficient to enter upon a matrimonial career with Lucile, so I decided to double it by making an investment in Golden Fleece mining stock. I lost the fifty thousand. With tears in her beautiful eyes, Lucile said she was sorry, and would wait for me to make another fortune. She did not say how long she would wait, and not hearing from me for three weeks while I was plugging away in the mountains, she married a one-legged old millionaire, and wrote me a letter saying she would never cease to love me."

"You certainly have been in bad luck," said John. "How about the third fortune?"

"Grass Valley bequeathed me that," replied Blake. A shade of regret swept across his face as he spoke, but the humor of his disasters brought a

smile to his lips. "I located some claims near Yuba City, and cleaned up forty thousand dollars in two months, selling out for two hundred thousand. Then I decided to invest my money where I couldn't lose it; so I built a hotel. It was a fine hotel, John. I will show it to you some day. For a year I was the most popular boniface in California. No hotel in the world was run on so liberal a plan. Guests could cash checks, borrow money, and settle their bills when they pleased. I suppose, John, that I'm the easiest mark that ever wore a diamond in a shirt-front and stood back of a marble counter. To recoup my losses in this palatial hostelry—and it was a dandy, John, if I did build it, I took a flyer with Katy D. You needn't look so solemn, John; Katy D. is a mining stock—or, rather, it was a mining stock. I've got sixty thousand shares of it yet, and I'm thinking of papering the walls of this cabin with it. After the hotel was sold, I had enough left to buy a set of mining tools and to grub-stake myself."

"And the third sweetheart?" asked John.

"She was a young widow and rich," replied Blake. "She was the widow of old Colonel Worthington, and her first name was Pauline. They were guests in my hotel, and the colonel died there. He left her over a million, and we were discussing the wedding day when Katy D. wiped me out of financial existence. Pauline was true to me in spite of this disaster, and offered to take me as I was, but I

don't want a woman to support me. So I bade her a tearful farewell, started out to make my fourth fortune, and here I am."

"And what have you now?"

"This mountain chateau," replied Blake with a lordly sweep of his arm, "and a hole in the ground back of it. Then I have a fine view of the valley, a good appetite, a slumbering conscience, and—and Dog, here, who never upbraids me for being seven kinds of a fool."

"You needn't fear that I shall lecture you," said John Burt. "It's no crime to be liberal, and from your account your reverses were caused by too much generosity and not enough caution. But we're both young, Jim, and a few knockdowns won't hurt one who has health, vigor and ambition. I want you to look at a map I have in my overcoat pocket."

John told the story of the dying sailor and his map, and read an extract from Peter Burt's letter. Then he produced the map, and they spread it out on the table and examined it by the light of the lantern. It was roughly drawn, but Blake soon got the lay of it, and placed it so as to conform to the points of the compass.

"I followed the trail all right," explained John, "until the storm set in, and then I had to feel my way. Before I lost my bearings I was about two miles from the point where this sailor claims to have found gold. I kept near the edge of the cliff

until I could go no further, and then curled up behind that rock in the hope that the storm would cease."

Blake studied the map with growing interest and excitement. With a splinter from a log as a marker, he traced the trail.

"I know every foot of it!" he exclaimed, resting the point of the splinter on a round spot on the map. "Here is Fisher's Lake. Every one knows where that is. You came that far by stage. Here is the creek which you follow for seven miles until you come to the old Wormley trail. You take that to the cliffs, and go along the cliffs until you cross four brooks and come to the fifth one. You were were within a hundred yards of that fifth stream, John. Now let's see the key to this thing."

John handed him the letter.

"'*From the east face of the square rock, on the north bank of the brook, at the edge of the cliff,*'" read Blake. "I know the rock well. Let's see. '*Thence east along the bank of the brook in a straight line four hundred and twenty-two feet, and then north at right angles, sixty-seven feet to the base of the tallest pine in the neighborhood.*'"

Blake rushed to the door, forgetful of the storm, to verify his suspicions. He pushed it open an inch, but a solid bank of snow blocked the way.

"Where do you suppose the base of that pine tree is?" he demanded. Without waiting for a reply he found a hatchet and tapped the clay floor

until he located a spot which gave a deadened sound. Then he chopped away a few inches of packed dirt and sank the blade into a solid substance.

"There's the base of the big pine tree described by your dead sailor, and I'll bet my life on it!" he shouted. "And here are sections of the tree," he continued, pointing to the logs which formed the foundation of the cabin. "I'm dead sure of it, John. It's about a hundred and forty yards from here to the edge of the cliff. I know, for I measured it. And its about twenty yards to the brook. What is more conclusive, this was by far the largest tree anywhere around. That's why I located the cabin here. Let's see what comes next!" His eyes glistened with excitement.

The instructions were to measure three hundred and eighteen feet north from the base of the tree and thence east to a carefully described rock, which Blake remembered. This was at the base of the incline. Within a hundred yards of this rock the key located three gold-bearing quartz ledges.

"I've been past it a hundred times. I've struck a pick all around there and never found ore," said Blake reflectively, "but that proves nothing. A thousand people walked over the Little Calaveras before I found the gilt. There's no use worrying about it; if it's there it will stay there, and we must wait until the storm is over before we can find it out. Wall, John," he concluded, relapsing

to the familiar Yankee drawl, "'don't this beat time,' as Uncle Toby Haynes used to say?"

"It certainly is remarkable," said John Burt, folding the map. "How did you happen to select this particular spot, Jim?"

"Just happened to—that's all," was the laconic reply. "I've trailed up and down the river several times, and this ridge struck my notion, so I thought I'd try it. I took a little good quartz out of the mouth of my tunnel, but the lead disappeared, and I've been boring in for months trying to strike it again. I laid out claims all along here, but this one seemed the most likely. As a matter of fact, I've depended on my luck, and so far it has never failed me."

"I suppose your claims cover the ground indicated on this map, don't they?" asked John.

"It don't make a bit of difference whether they do or not," asserted Blake with much vigor. "If you find ore, the claim is yours, John, and don't you forget it! If this old tunnel of mine failed, I should never have begun another one. So go ahead, and good luck to you! You can share my cabin and have anything I've got."

"Suppose we go partners in the Sailor Mine," suggested John. "I have a tidy sum of money that we can use if necessary, and I'll offset that and the map against your claim and experience. That strikes me as fair, old man. What do you say, Jim?"

"It's not fair to you, John, but I'll gladly accept and here's my hand on it!"

Thus was formed the mining firm of Burton & Blake, John assuming the name of Burton for reasons apparent enough.

During the night the white flakes turned to sleet and rain, and cleared off with zero weather, leaving a heavy crust on the snow. After breakfast they set about locating the sailor's vein. In less than an hour Jim Blake sunk his pick into a quartz rock which showed free gold. John's knowledge of mineralogy was theoretical, but the subject was part of his course at Harvard, and he had studied his text-books assiduously during the long sea voyage. While Jim was gloating over his find, John appeared from behind a ledge. He handed Blake a nugget which weighed fully ten pounds, and a glance—to say nothing of the weight—showed it to be almost solid gold. Blake grasped it, devoured its dull gloss with sparkling eyes, and hurled his hat high in the air.

"We are rich! We are rich!" he shouted until the rocks resounded. "*Monte Cristo* was a beggar compared with Burton & Blake! Hurrah for the Sailor Mine! Hurrah for the Sailor Mine and John Burt! You can't keep a good man down! Hurrah!"

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE QUEST FOR GOLD

THE location of the Sailor Mine was an ideal one. The brook was fed by perpetual snows, and furnished plenty of water. The broad edge of the cliff formed a natural road with an easy grade to the Wormley Trail. This led into the valley, and connected with the stage road, which wound its way to Auburn. John Burt studied the situation and grasped its topographical advantages. He conjured a village in the valley below, and mentally crested the ridges with mining mills and machinery.

The two young giants performed wonders in the three weeks which followed their discovery of gold. Glowing with health and strength, and inspired by ambition, they gnawed ragged holes into the side of the mountains with their picks and drills. No storm was wild enough to call a halt. John Burt made rough tests of the quartz, and after generous allowance for all possible errors it showed results which surpassed their highest expectations. Several nuggets were found, but these were of small value compared with the broad stratum of ore which opened out from the spot selected by John Burt. The claim chosen by Blake soon exhausted itself, and he turned his attention to the third, expressing a fear that he was a "hoodoo."

"But 'there's luck in odd numbers says Rory O'Moore,'" sang Blake as he poised on a shelving

ledge and vigorously drove a crowbar into a crevice. Ere the sun dropped below the range he had uncovered another wide, deep vein of gold-bearing quartz.

Turning towards the cabin, he saw over his right shoulder the thin white rim of the new moon, hanging like a silver sickle in the deep blue of the sky. The line of the opposite horns of this gleaming crescent was perpendicular to the horizon. To the farmer this is the "wet moon," the harbinger of abundant harvests. The adventurer, gambler, or miner looks on Luna, when thus seen for the first time, as the sure augury of luck. Blake was possessed of that buoyant, elastic type of superstition which affirms faith in favorable portents and spurns all others as unworthy of credence. As a schoolboy the fables of mythology made more impression on him than did historical facts, but he worshipped none but propitious gods. Singing in a voice which awoke the echoes, he made his way between the rocks, his fine face lighted by the last glow of the twilight. A battered sledge was thrown across his shoulder, and his figure seemed magnified in the uncertain light. Graceful in his strength, he looked like a follower of Vulcan returning from a quest for metals demanded by that immortal craftsman, or like some mountain god yielding proud allegiance only to Jupiter himself.

The spring rains set in, and the brook became a foaming, thundering torrent. Avalanches tore

down the mountain-sides, plowed their way over the cliff, and, with a roar which shook the cabin, hurled themselves into the valley. The pine trees lost their plumes of snow, and sang in a higher key the refrain which told of relief from burdens carried complainingly for months. The magic of drenching rains and warm south winds checkered the snow-clad foothills with patches of brown. Nature was shrouded in warm, clinging mist; ten thousand rivulets spurted into life as the sun beat upon the hills; and winter vanished from the valley as clouds fade from a summer sky.

Piled in gray heaps near the tunnel was ore worth not less than forty thousand dollars. With the flight of the snow and the birth of spring, Blake wearied of his task and longed for its rewards.

"Tell you what let's do, John," he said one night after supper. "Let's go to Auburn and negotiate for the sale of these mines. We can't work them ourselves. I'm all right when it comes to prospecting and opening up a mine, but I've no taste for sticking to it. My plan is to realize what you can, and let some one else do the hard work. We ought to get big money for the Sailor, John."

"How much?" asked John after a moment's pause.

"Half a million," replied Blake positively, with a loving accent on the "million." "Half a million is dead cheap. Don't you think so, John?"

"I shall not sell my interest—at least, not at

present," said John Burt, "and I advise you not to. We can handle this property without trouble, and make more in developing it than by selling it. I have nearly ten thousand dollars in cash. In a few months we can convert the ore already extracted into gold. I believe the mine will yield three hundred thousand dollars profit the first year. That's the wiser plan, Jim. Besides, I doubt if we can get an offer of half a million."

"We can try, John," said Blake hopefully. "Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars is a lot of money. I would take it in a minute if I could get it."

They discussed the matter for hours, but Blake would not recede from his position. John did not urge him to the contrary, but calmly presented the facts as he saw them. Dangling before Blake's eyes was a purse containing two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, to be obtained without further work or worry. It meant pleasure, affluence, ease, liberty—it was enough. Not so with John Burt. When the rock crumbled beneath the first blow of his pick, and the ten pound nugget gleamed in the shale, he recalled the parting words of Peter Burt quoting the language of Isaiah: "I will give thee the treasures of darkness and the hidden riches of secret places."

Superstition, in the ordinary sense, had no hold on John Burt; but he had an abiding faith in his destiny. The dying sailor and his crude map was a

part of it. His stern old grandfather was the oracle of his fortunes, and the lonely rock behind the graveyard was the Delphi from which the message was delivered.

With a faith sublime as that which inspired Orpheus, he believed that Jessie Carden was linked to him in ties which time and distance could not sunder. Fate also had created Arthur Morris, not as a stumbling-block, but as a stepping-stone to his advancement. He looked on Morris not with hatred, but with pity.

But why had James Blake been thrust into his career? Surely it was not an unreasoning chance that decreed that Blake should rear his hut on the very spot marked by the trembling hand of the sailor. John read his partner as he read his own thoughts. He fathomed the man's weaknesses, and while he could not admire them, he thought none the less of the companion of his boyhood. But he could not allow Blake to stand in his way. The mining partnership so strangely formed could be nothing more than a temporary arrangement, but John Burt was determined that in its sundering no advantages should be sacrificed. He was resolved to protect Blake's interests, and equally resolved to conserve his own.

"We'll talk no more about this matter to-night, Jim," he said, when Blake had finished telling of the great things which could be accomplished with a quarter of a million dollars. "I'll

think it over for two or three days, and then we'll take the question up and decide it. We could not reach Auburn now if we tried. Wait until the floods subside. The more we dig, the more the mines will sell for."

Blake curbed his impatience and worked and waited. He knew John Burt well enough not to mention the topic during the days which followed.

One evening, after supper, John spent an hour or more figuring in an old note-book. Jim smoked, and the dog dozed by the fire.

"I suppose you are still determined to sell your share in these mines, Jim?" said John, putting the book in his pocket and lighting his pipe.

"I am, if I can get an offer of a quarter of a million," replied Jim.

"You're making a mistake, old man," said John Burt, laying his hand on his friend's shoulder, "but you have as much right to your opinion as I have to mine. So we will call that settled. I told you I would make you a proposition, and here it is. There are two mines, and they look equally promising. I propose that you take one and I take the other. We will call the south one 'Sailor A,' and the north 'Sailor B.' You can have your choice."

"That's not fair!" said Jim. "I'll play you a game of seven-up for the first choice; three games of ten points each—best two out of three to take first choice."

"All right," responded John, as Blake pro-

duced a well-worn pack of cards and shuffled them. "But before we play, let me finish my proposition. You wish to sell your claims for two hundred and fifty thousand if you can find a purchaser. Will you give me an option on your claim? You should be able to get along for sixty days with five thousand dollars in cash. I doubt if you can close so large a deal in less time. I'll give you five thousand in cash for the following option on your claim—you to deed me all your rights in consideration of one hundred thousand dollars, payable in sixty days from this date; one hundred thousand payable in six months from date, and one hundred thousand payable one year from date. And——"

"You bet your life I will," interrupted Blake, extending his hand. "For your sake, John, I hope you'll win, and I believe you will. I'd rather see you make money out of these mines than any one in the world; but doggone it, John, I haven't the patience or ability to run a mine. Guess I'm lazy. Make it two thousand in cash, John. That will be enough. I can get along on a thousand a month if I let the mining exchange alone, and I'm going to. Make it two thousand and I'll go you."

"We will call it twenty-five hundred, and you can have the other twenty-five hundred if you need it," said John smiling. "But I had not finished. You shall have one-half of the proceeds from the sale of the ore already mined. That should net you $25,000. You need not shake your head. In

any arrangement I may make with outsiders, you shall have ten per cent. of all profits payable to me. There's no use protesting. That clause goes in, or the deal is off. There's nothing generous about it. It's a pure matter of fairness. I may fail in my efforts, and thus prevent your negotiating an advantageous sale. If I succeed, ten per cent. will give you a steady revenue for years. I wish to feel that you will always have an interest in the Sailor Mine."

"All right, John," said Jim, finally. "You're a stubborn man to do business with. Now we'll play that game of seven-up."

Blake won the first game and John the second. In the third game John had two to go, and Blake lacked six points. It was his deal. He turned two jacks before the trump was selected, and then made high, low, jack, and the game, and won the rubber and the first choice.

"Lucky in cards, unlucky in love," laughed Blake as he arose from the table. "Sailor A is mine—subject to your option, John."

John drew up an agreement and an option, which both signed, and the firm of Burton & Blake was dissolved. Blake accepted twenty-five hundred dollars in cash, and three days later both arrived in the little mining town of Auburn, from which they sent a trustworthy man back to the cabin, to remain on guard until John Burt returned.

Bidding Blake adieu for a week or more, Burt proceeded to San Francisco.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE CAPITALIST

JOHN BURT was without experience in financial affairs; a stranger in San Francisco, lacking endorsements or credentials; a fugitive under an assumed name; yet he faced the situation with confidence. He believed that the Sailor Mine was destined to be the basis of his fortune. The existence of the quartz veins was a physical fact—his realization of wealth from them was a question of generalship, judgment and strategy.

He engaged rooms in the Palace Hotel—registering under the name of John Burton—and made inquiries concerning the leading mining experts of the city. He learned that one of them was a graduate of Harvard. John Burt had passed only a year within the walls of the great university, but he had absorbed its traditions, and looked upon it as his alma mater. He therefore decided to present his case to David Parker. He wrote the famous expert a brief letter, and was duly accorded an interview.

David Parker was a man of forty, who had secured a commanding position in his calling. He was of medium height and of sturdy figure. A well-shaped head; pale blue eyes beneath shadowing lashes; a smooth face; thin, straight lips; a projecting jaw, scarred as from a knife thrust; a careful smile, a grip of iron, and a cautiousness in speech which amounted almost to an impediment—such is

a crude sketch of David Parker, mining expert and civil and mechanical engineer.

During the brief preliminary conversation, John Burt studied David Parker and decided to trust him. Then he related the story of the discovery of the Sailor Mine.

"I have always believed that those hills—that those hills—contained gold," said David Parker hesitatingly. He paused and idly scrawled geometrical figures on a paper pad. "Why—why do you come to—to me, Mr. Burton?" he asked, looking up. "I am not an—an investor. I'm an expert—at least, an—an alleged expert."

"I wish you to refer me to an investor," replied John Burt. "As I have told you, I'm a stranger in San Francisco, and have no time to spend looking for an honest investor. You are an expert in metals and should be in capitalists. You know them; I don't. I'm willing to pay your rate for expert information on the subject of trustworthy capital."

"Go and see John Hawkins," said David Parker, as a faint smile froze on his face. "This is hardly—professional, you know, Mr. Burton, but I will do it. Do not use my name. Mr. Hawkins will see you and—and talk with you. If he says he will do a thing he—he will do it. He may—he may do a thing if he says he won't. He is honest—but hard—hard as granite. I hope you may succeed with him—Mr. Burton. My fee? Nothing—not a dollar. This is strictly—strictly unprofessional,

Mr. Burton. We will charge it—charge it to the old college. Good day, Mr. Burton. Let me know how you succeed. If you and—Mr. Hawkins cannot come to terms, I—I might refer you to others. Good day; good day, sir—and good luck!"

As David Parker predicted, John Burt had little trouble in securing an interview with John Hawkins, millionaire mine owner and investor.

There was a democracy pervading the Hawkins office not in keeping with its palatial fittings. The walls above the carved mahogany wainscoting were hung with tapestry and adorned with paintings set in massive gilt frames. In the public reception-room was a marble fountain, and the musical splash of its water was soothing. The eye was greeted by palms, ferns, bits of bronze, and expensive bric-a-brac. The air was heavy with tobacco smoke, and from an inner room came the sound of voices and boisterous laughter.

John Burt wrote the name "John Burton" on a card, and gave it to an attendant. Two burly men stood in the doorway, pausing to make some parting remark, which was followed by roars of merriment. The attendant brushed past them as they closed the door.

"Tell him to come in," was the order given in a voice sonorous through the heavy partition.

Seated at an oak desk was one of those men whom nature occasionally designs for the purpose of keeping the present in touch with the dim past,

when giants communed with mortals. No artist could look on John Hawkins and deride the fables which tell of the proportions of Hercules, or depict the physical majesty of the bearded gods of Olympus. The great oak chair in which he sat groaned beneath his weight, as he turned and looked at John Burt. Above a bulging forehead was a mass of iron gray hair which fell nearly to his shoulders. The long, full beard was of a tawny shade, and the mouth was hidden by a sweeping moustache of the same cast. Steel-gray eyes rested beneath bushy masses of eyebrows, and were parted by a nose which once might have belonged to Odin. The thought of this stern old Norse-god came to John Burt as he looked into those eyes—eyes which had in their depths ceaseless ambition, relentless energy, merciless courage, and that calm mastery which comes from complacent introspection—the confidence born of justifiable egotism; the consciousness of generalship by birthright.

So striking was Hawkins' resemblance to Odin that John would have been little surprised to have seen perched on his shoulders the ravens Hugin and Munin, whose fabled duty it is to fly every day over the world and report to their master all they have seen and heard. But a stock ticker at his right hand, and telegraph instruments in the outer room, were the modern message bearers, more rapid and accurate than the mythological ravens, and cruel at times as the wolves Geri and Freki, who sit at Odin's feet.

The modern knight, in these degenerate days, is the one who boldly shies his castor into a counting-room, or faces with unlowered eyes and unruffled mien those moneyed gods who rule mankind and launch the thunderbolts of gold.

John Burt's education in the etiquette of servility and in adulation of material things was singularly defective. This may have been due to his country training. The year spent in the democracy which permeates Harvard had not lessened his self-reliance. It never occurred to John Burt that he should stand in awe of the Hawkins millions. He was impressed by the leonine head and gigantic proportions of the magnate, as an artist is when he contemplates for the first time some stupendous work of nature. He returned the great man's gaze, before which most strangers quailed and faltered, with an answering look which calmly asserted an equality, yielding deference only to a seniority of years.

John Hawkins threw his head back, and for a moment silently surveyed his visitor as a foe measures his opponent. This attitude is as instinctive to the man of wealth as is the crouch of the tiger when hungry rivals approach his slaughtered quarry.

John Hawkins looked on no stripling. The bronzed and bearded man who faced him stood erect in the symmetrical proportions of two hundred pounds of bone, sinew, and muscle.

"How do you do? What can I do for you,

sir? Take a chair." Mr. Hawkins glanced again at the card, tossed it on his desk, and wheeled and confronted John Burt, who had accepted this gruff invitation.

"I own or control some recently discovered gold mines, and am in San Francisco for the purpose of interesting capital in their development," said John Burt. "I am informed that you are an investor in mining property. I am in a position to submit propositions which may result to our mutual advantage."

"Where are they?" growled Mr. John Hawkins.

For an answer John stepped behind the capitalist and placed his fingers on a point indicated on a large map of California which hung on the wall.

"They are located on the west slope of the Sierra Nevadas, at an altitude of about two thousand feet above the river, five miles south of the Wormley Trail," said John. "Here is a rough detailed map of the surroundings." He handed the chart to Mr. Hawkins.

"There's no gold there—not an ounce," declared the magnate. "You have found a mare's nest, young man. I looked that country over ten years ago. There's no gold there."

"My partner and I have extracted forty thousand dollars' worth of high-grade ore there in three weeks," said John Burt quietly. "Here is a specimen of it. Here is something else." He placed a

sample of ore and the ten-pound nugget in Hawkins' outstretched palm.

At the sight of the ore, and of the dull gloss of the nugget, a wonderful transformation took place in John Hawkins. The air of bored indifference vanished. He gazed at the ore with the rapt look of an enthusiast. The weight of the nugget told its own story.

For two minutes he poised them in his hands and said nothing.

Then he turned and studied the map on the wall, tracing with his huge forefinger the thin line of the brook to its juncture with the river. He then consulted a colored chart, humming the while a nondescript air in a tone which sounded like the purring of a Bengal tiger.

"Go ahead and tell me about this," he said abruptly. "You look like an honest man, and it's a waste of time to lie to me. How did you happen to strike ore in those hills? They say that gold is where it's found, and I'll be darned if this don't look like it! What have you got, and how did you get it?"

In a matter of fact way John Burt related the story of the discovery and development of the Sailor Mine. He named the terms of the Blake option, and answered without hesitation the pointed questions asked by John Hawkins.

"This may be worth looking into," said the capitalist, as he ran his hand through his tawny

gray hair. "I'll send an expert to investigate it and make a report." He rang a bell and a boy responded. "Go and tell David Parker I want him," he ordered.

"Until we have arrived at some tentative agreement or understanding, I don't care to have your expert examine this property," said John Burt, when the boy had closed the door.

Mr. Hawkins glared at him in amazement.

"Your expert will find one of two things—either that my estimate of these claims is accurate, or that it is not," continued John Burt calmly. "In the latter event you would drop the matter. If, on the contrary, your expert confirms my estimate—as he will—it then becomes necessary to act under a definite understanding. The terms of such an agreement should be settled before your expert begins his work. In brief, the question is this. What agreement will you make, assuming that your expert confirms my statements? We can settle that matter now as well as in two weeks from now, and it will save time and avoid friction."

"That sounds like business," roared John Hawkins, a gleam of admiration for an opponent worthy of his attention showing in his eyes. "That's the way I like to hear a man talk. Make your proposition. You're selling; I'm buying. What's your terms? Let's have them."

"You will assume the payments on the Blake option, which amount to three hundred thousand

dollars," said John, noting the amount on a memorandum pad. "In addition to that, you will advance the money necessary for the development of the property and for the handling of the ore. Fifty per cent. of the net profits will revert to you until the money paid to Blake is refunded. In consideration of the capital thus advanced, your interest in the property will amount to forty per cent. and mine to sixty per cent. These are my terms, and the only ones on which I will part with my interest in the Sailor Mine."

"I won't do it!" thundered John Hawkins, slamming down the cover of his desk. "I must have control when I invest. Make my interest fifty-one per cent. and I will talk to you. Fifty-one per cent. or nothing."

"Very well," said John Burt, rising; "it is impossible for us to agree, and well we should know it in advance. In case I am unable to exercise my option, you may be able to purchase the Blake interest outright for two hundred and fifty thousand. I shall be glad, if that time comes, to put you into communication with him. You will find it a good investment. You could not purchase my share for ten times the amount. Good-day, Mr. Hawkins. I am stopping at the Palace Hotel, and letters sent there will be forwarded when I leave the city. Good-day, sir."

Two days later John Burt received a message from David Parker, asking him to call at his office.

Scientific tests had shown a much higher percentage of gold than those indicated by the crude experiments made in the cabin by John Burt.

"I had an interview with Mr. Hawkins this morning," said David Parker, after greeting his visitor. "Mr. Hawkins is a very peculiar man—very peculiar—as I have told you. But he is honest—honest as a dog. He is from Maine—and he likes to dicker. He made his start in California by trading a horse—and a mighty poor horse it was—for a mine—and it proved one of the best mines—one of the best mines in the State. He says you are the hardest man to deal with he ever saw—a great compliment for you, Mr. Burton, I assure you. He has had his lawyer draw up a provisional agreement in conformity to your terms—as he understood them—and instructs me to say to you that we are invited to dine with him at his club this afternoon, when the matter may be finally arranged. If so, I am to accompany you to the mines to-morrow."

Though not greatly surprised, John was pleased as he listened to the slowly delivered decision announced by the expert. He thanked Parker, and arranged to meet him with Mr. Hawkins at a later hour. He then called on an attorney and submitted the agreement to his inspection. After making a few minor alterations, the lawyer assured John that the agreement fully protected his interests.

Over a dinner such as is possible only in San Francisco the agreement was ratified. At the table,

the crusty veneer with which the great capitalist protected himself melted away. He proposed a toast to John's health and to the success of the Sailor Mine. The magnate disappeared, and the big, whole-souled pioneer sat in his place. He told tales of early California; of his trials, triumphs, and reverses; laughing at his early disasters with a voice which rattled the glasses. There was humor and at times pathos in these fragments of a wonderful career, but through them all ran a vein of rugged honesty.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

SUCCESS AND FAILURE

DAVID PARKER'S report on the Sailor Mine was submitted to Mr. Hawkins ten days later, and it more than confirmed the statements made by John Burt. Upon receipt of it, the magnate proceeded to the mine with Burt and Parker, taking several miners in whom he had absolute confidence. New claims were located on the mountain-side, and in the valley below in anticipation of possible placer deposits.

Jim Blake, meanwhile, cheerfully informed every one that his winter's work had been thrown away. He lounged about Auburn for a week, cursing his luck and "lying like a gentleman," as he subsequently explained. Then he left for San Francisco, passing John on the way. They met at a stage junction, and arranged to see each other in 'Frisco on John's return. Blake was delighted when informed of John's progress.

"Hope you make millions, and am betting you will," said Jim as they shook hands and separated.

Mr. Hawkins, David Parker, and John Burt spent three nights in the cramped quarters of the log cabin, and thoroughly enjoyed themselves. In those three days were planned the improvements which a few weeks later threw the surrounding region into a fever of excitement, and started a stampede for the new Golconda.

On their return to San Francisco a formal

agreement was signed, and John Burt and John Hawkins became partners in the Sailor Mine and in the scores of claims surrounding it.

For eighteen months John directed the efforts of an army of men, swarming like ants on the mountain-side. A village sprang up in the valley and clustered about the stamp mills of Hawkins & Company. Day and night the fractured ore fed the thundering maws of the crushers. Churches, gambling houses, stores and saloons contended for patronage. Thousands of claims were staked out; but nature had ceased from her gold sowing when she finished the broad layers of the Sailor Mine and its outcroppings. Jim Blake's tunnel proved to have missed the ore at three points by a few feet; another week's work would have tapped one of the more productive veins. Blake visited the mines and smiled grimly when he saw how fortune had sported with him.

The mines produced eight hundred thousand dollars in gold the first year. After deducting Blake's price, John's share in the profits was more than a hundred thousand. His dividends in the following six months were three hundred thousand, and for the year nearly seven hundred thousand. Following Mr. Hawkins' advice, he so invested his profits as to become a millionaire before he had been in California two years.

Having placed the mining property on a permanent footing, and in charge of competent mana-

gers and superintendents, he transferred his headquarters to San Francisco. He still made periodical visits to the mines, where he had an office in the old log cabin; orders having been issued not to destroy it under any circumstances.

When Jim Blake received his first instalment of a hundred thousand dollars, he gave a dinner in John Burt's honor in the Occidental Hotel. Twenty guests were present, including John Hawkins and David Parker. This social function cost Blake a thousand dollars, and he was more than satisfied when the newspapers declared that it was the most elaborate gastronomical affair in the history of the California metropolis.

"You would be a long time in Rocky Woods before you had a dinner like that," said Blake the next day, as he looked lovingly at a newspaper headline which read "Fifty Dollars a Plate!"

Ten days after this famous feast Blake was without a dollar.

"Mining stocks," he explained to John Burt. "I plunged on Robert Emmet, and they trimmed me. I was sixty thousand ahead at one stage of the game, and I pressed it for a slam. Robert Emmet hasn't stopped going down yet. The stock looks more like a liability than an asset. A man caught with it on his clothes is liable to be arrested. If I had struck it right, Mrs. Worthington would now be Mrs. James Blake."

John advanced Jim ten thousand dollars, and

gave him advice which was worth more than the money. Blake followed the advice for a month. When his second instalment was due, he had drawn so heavily against John that he had a balance of only forty-five thousand. Two months after he had received a check for the final payment, which terminated his original property rights in the mines, he admitted to John Burt that his total assets did not exceed five thousand dollars.

"As a Napoleon of speculation and finance," laughed Blake, deftly rolling a cigarette, "I run largely to Leipsics and Waterloos. When it comes to sustaining defeats and reverses, I can give the immortal Corsican cards and spades. I did fairly well with that last hundred thousand; had it up to nearly four hundred thousand on a tip from Hawkins. That was only a hundred thousand from a swell wedding. Then I cut loose from amateur advice, and relied on my own keen judgment. Lost all of it in two weeks."

Blake was silent for a few moments, and an expression of disappointment showed in his eyes. The next instant it was gone.

"Tell you how you can make a barrel of money on me, John," he exclaimed. "I'll inform you what stocks to buy—you sell 'em. I'll advise you to sell a stock—you buy it. Copper all my bets and get rich. An infallible hoodoo is as good a guide as a sure mascot. By systematically shunning my opinion, any man can make money.

Between the Scylla of what I say and the Charybdis of what I do is the safe passage which leads to fortune. This is not a kick, John, but merely a few disinterested financial observations;" and Blake lay back in his chair, smiled complacently, and blew rings of smoke towards the ceiling.

"I've a better plan than that," said John after a moment's silence, "and one which will give full scope for your talents. You have not made a success in speculating on your own account, but that is not to your discredit. It indicates that your energies have been misdirected. I've been thinking for some time, Jim, of making a proposition to you. I recently purchased seats on the mining and stock exchanges, and wish to become a silent partner in an investing and brokerage firm. Mr. Hawkins will have no financial interest in the proposed house, but he has promised to support it by his patronage and influence. I will furnish most of the capital; but for reasons that you will appreciate, I prefer to remain in the background."

"It will win, John; you always win," declared Blake, "but what can I do? At this moment I could'nt finance a boot-black stand."

"Let me finish," said John. "How would you like to become the nominal head of such a concern, under the title, we will say, of 'James Blake & Company'? In order that you may have a substantial interest in the firm, I will advance you a hundred thousand dollars on your future profits

from the Sailor Mine, and invest with the firm four hundred thousand of my own money. I intend to conduct some rather extensive stock operations, but they will be on personal account. I believe you can do far better by confining your attention to the executive work of such a concern and letting speculation alone. What do you think of my proposition?"

"Are you in earnest, John?"

"I mean just what I said."

"Nothing would suit me better, but I'm afraid I'm not qualified for such a position," said Blake, delighted beyond measure. Once more the path to wealth opened out before him.

"I know your qualifications," said John. "You will become the most popular and capable broker in San Francisco. Dine with me to-night, and we'll arrange the details and drink a toast with Hawkins to the success of James Blake & Company."

Announcement of the establishment of the new firm was made the following week. Mr. Hawkins refused to confirm or deny the popular rumor that he was the banker of the concern; and no one suspected that John Burton had any financial interest in it. That quiet gentleman was unknown to fame in San Francisco. He took possession of a private office inaccessible to customers, and lived in secluded apartments.

Blake & Company first attracted speculative

attention by its masterly handling of the corner in the stock of Don Pedro Smelting and Mining Company. In that campaign the affrighted "shorts" trampled each other under foot in efforts to meet their contracts. The profits of the firm were estimated at a million and a half. John Hawkins was publicly named as the manipulator and principal winner, but James Blake was hailed as the daring operator whose brilliant generalship had crowned the success of the deal. In the speculative firmament he suddenly blazed forth as a star of the first magnitude.

Those who had laughed at Blake's numerous failures were the first to congratulate him. The fawning followers of success hastened to declare their allegiance. Customers flocked to the new firm and gazed with awe at the majestic figure of Mr. Hawkins, who occasionally visited the offices and held mysterious conferences with James Blake, or with the unknown and silent Burton. Those few who knew John Burton by sight considered him a possible customer, or more likely a plodding lieutenant in the employ of Blake.

James Blake suddenly developed traits which bewildered his friends and surprised himself. Under the guidance of John Burt he mastered the details of the business, displaying ability in dealing with the intricacies which formed the daily routine. Incapable of acting for himself, he could follow a chartered course with the precision of a pilot.

Nature had denied to James Blake that spark of genius which inspires the leader, but he possessed in a high degree those traits which leadership attracts and invests with power. He grasped Burt's plans of campaign with the intuition of a Bernadotte, and executed them with the dash and skill of a Murat. He made several speculative experiments on his own account, some of them at considerable expense, before becoming convinced that "he could not bet his own chips," as he expressed it. He then decided to become rich by following the advice of the quiet man who occupied an inner room in the luxurious offices.

In the two years which followed, wealth poured into the coffers of James Blake & Company. Blake became a bank director and an investor in mines, railroads, and other properties. Burt did not hesitate to place his millions in the hands of his friend. No word of anger or shade of doubt arose between them during these eventful months.

Blake's name figured in great financial transactions, and his opinion was eagerly sought in matters of commercial moment. Handsome as Apollo, and the reputed possessor of a large fortune, he became a society lion, a popular club man, and the target of matrimonial archers.

But Blake's heart was true to the charming Mrs. Worthington.

"A man who respects himself cannot marry a wealthy widow on less than a million," he said to

John. "If I follow your advice I'll be a Benedict in a year or so. And Pauline, dear girl, is worth waiting for."

Blake accepted his honors with dignity and modesty. He was willing and proud to shine in the reflected light of John Burt. He would have endured unmerited disgrace as serenely as he wore unwon honors.

From the moment when Peter Burt stood with uplifted arms in the lightning's glare and gave him a blessing, John Burt had no doubt of his financial future. With his eyes fixed unwaveringly on an immediate purpose, he had boldly commanded fortune to do his bidding. Sternly repressing the desire to taste the fruits of early triumphs, he had immured himself from the world and the ones he loved, content to await the time appointed by destiny for the crucial contest, and at last that hour was at hand.

A profile portrait of Jessie Carden rested on an easel which stood near the desk in his library. It was the work of an artist of local fame, drawn from a tintype photograph—his sole memento of the woman he loved. The pink paper frame, with a design in hearts and roses, which surrounded the photograph, was frayed and torn, but Jessie's sweet face was revealed on the glossy surface of the metal —the face which had looked into his one summer day when they rode to Hingham, and Jessie proposed they should "have their tintypes taken."

A wandering photographer had pitched his tent near the old churchyard. Large frames, containing innumerable samples of his skill, stood in front of the tent—photographs of country swains hand in hand with laughing, blushing girls; blissful couples, with the groom resting his hand on the bride's shoulder, as if fearful she would escape, rustic sports with tilted hats and cigars in their mouths; members of secret societies with dangling swords and impressive regalia; sombre old maids, with Niagara Falls showing in the background—these and others like them testified to the versatility of his art.

Jessie was in her sixteenth year when the picture was taken, but the long riding-habit and the queenly pose of her head against the plain background added dignity to the nascent charms of face and figure. The San Francisco artist had taken this crude print as his subject, and by rare chance had caught the spirit and transferred it to canvas.

John would sit for hours during the long evenings and gaze at this portrait. It was the one visible connecting link between the past and the present, the ocular inspiration for his future. He regretted a thousand times that the face was not turned towards him, that he might look again into those eyes and force the canvas to convey his thoughts.

Again and again he attempted to picture the Jessie Carden of the present. With his eyes fixed on the portrait, and his mind centered on its origi-

nal, he struggled to span the void of miles and years which parted them, and to hold communion with her. At times he imagined the message was received, and that a loving answer came, bidding him to have faith and to persevere. Surely such correspondence was not in violation of his promise to Peter Burt! Then he would turn to his books, and with a light heart toil far into the night. In this room he mastered the secrets of finance and of commerce. With himself as tutor, he took a postgraduate course in business. No detail was too slight, no problem too intricate, to escape his attention. The world was the chessboard of his future operations, and he explored its past and studied its present with zeal unflagging and faith unbounded.

But when slumber fell upon him, and his soul wandered into unknown regions, he dreamed—dreamed not of millions nor of triumphs over master minds. He dreamed of Jessie Carden.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

A BRILLIANT CAMPAIGN

JAMES BLAKE yet longed for speculative laurels. His one ambition was to achieve some sweeping coup, and taste the inward joy of triumph—sweeter far than the undeserved fame which had been thrust upon him. He esteemed the financial spoils of such a victory as nothing compared to the pride he would feel in justifying John Burt's confidence in his abilities.

Blake lived in an atmosphere of chance. Day after day he witnessed the success of men who had sought and followed his advice, and it was maddening to reflect that fortune seemed to avert her face whenever he himself petitioned at her shrine. But no rebuff can entirely shatter that yearning faith which nerves the hand of the votary of chance, and Blake still believed that the time would come when the fickle goddess would smile on him. He was not so vain as to compare himself with John Burt, nor so unkind as to attribute the latter's success to luck; but he did believe that the fates had strangely requited his abilities!

"For an unlucky man I am probably the luckiest person in the world," he said to himself as he pondered his odd situation. "I am fate's freak!"

When he had amassed half a million of dollars the temptation to risk it was too strong to be resisted. John Burt had just terminated a campaign which had netted him nearly a million in profit, and

John Hawkins had been equally successful. Blake saw a chance and took it. With nerve and skill he forced a stock to a point where victory seemed certain; but an unforeseen event ruined his chances at the moment when the spell of ill-luck seemed broken. The market turned, but by a series of moves, brilliant as if inspired by success instead of disaster, Blake saved himself from a complete rout, and emerged with one-half of his capital.

For the first time in his life Blake was discouraged. He was too much cast down to inform John Burt of this disaster. He felt that his defeat was undeserved, and for a while he remained moody and despondent; but he finally recovered his spirits, and grimly decided to make another effort at the first opportunity.

A few days later he held an interview with John Burt—an interview destined to mark an epoch in his career.

"Can you arrange your affairs so as to go to New York for me, starting on Saturday?" asked John Burt.

"I can start to-night if necessary," replied Blake.

"Saturday night will be better," said Burt. "Two important railroad stocks will decline heavily next week. They are now buoyant, and the public is eager to buy them. I shall have disposed of my interest in them before you reach New York. Two million dollars will be placed there to your credit.

Proceed at once, on your arrival, to sell short one hundred thousand shares of each of these stocks. You should be able to do this in three days without seriously breaking the market. Wire me the moment you have sold these amounts. You hold in your name between five and six million dollars' worth of stocks and bonds, which are listed on the New York Exchange. Express them to New York at once. I propose to convert them into cash. When I wire you, throw them on the market and sell more of the railroad stocks. I have designed a special cipher code with which you must become familiar. This is our introduction to the Eastern market. We'll discuss the details before you leave, and I have absolute faith in your ability to conduct the campaign."

For a moment the magnitude of the proposed operation, and its weight of responsibility, almost crushed James Blake. He was worth but a paltry amount, with a long record of speculative failures, yet John Burt proposed to intrust him with millions, without the scratch of a pen for security. More than that, he was deemed worthy to conduct one of the most colossal operations in the history of speculation.

It was a proud moment for Blake. There was no shadow of envy or jealousy in his thoughts as he looked into the face of the companion of his boyhood, and heard him speak calmly of millions and of launching them against the giants of Wall Street.

"I can do it! I will do it!" he exclaimed. "I

see your plan, and it's magnificent, John, magnificent! It will win—win beyond a doubt. But you took my breath away at first, John."

"Your special commission will be the profits on fifty thousand shares," continued John Burt. "Unless I am much mistaken this will more than recoup your recent loss. You deserved to win in that venture, Jim, and I congratulate you on the splendid way in which you retreated. A masterly retreat is more creditable than a haphazard victory. How did I learn of it? I'll tell you some time. There are other matters in which I am much interested, and of which I have not spoken in years.

John was silent for a moment, and a far-off look came to his eyes.

"I have two important personal commissions for you, Jim," he said, looking into the face of his friend.

"While in New York ascertain for me if Arthur Morris is alive. Find out what he is doing, and learn what you can about him. The second task is a more delicate one. It concerns Miss Carden. I wish to know——"

"I know exactly what you want," interrupted Jim Blake as John hesitated. "You want to know all about her; and you shall have a full report when I return. You want to know where she is, how she is, if she yet loves you, and——"

"You need not attempt the latter task," said John rather shortly. "You are likely to under-

take too much. For the present I do not care to acquaint Miss Carden, or any one in the East, with my whereabouts, or even with the fact of my existence. Be careful in this matter, Jim. Of course you will go to Hingham and visit your kinsfolk. You can easily learn all I care to know from the Bishops, or perhaps from Sam Rounds. If not, go to Boston; but get the facts without calling on Miss Carden. You understand, don't you, Jim?"

"Certainly I do, old fellow," said Jim heartily. "I'll be as cautious as a dime-novel sleuth. I won't spoil your little surprise party. But honestly, John, I'd much rather have the privilege of meeting Miss Carden and telling her that I knew a man named John Burt; that he's very much alive, healthy, and handsome; that he's worth more millions than her father ever saw, and that she's the luckiest little maiden in all New England to have the love of such a man."

"She might not agree with you, Jim," laughed John Burt. "I certainly haven't said anything which would lead you to suppose that—that——"

"Of course you haven't, but I know you love her, and I'll bet she loves you. I can read a lover as you read a stock ticker. I take off my hat to you, John, on all other subjects, but we are peers when it comes to affairs of the heart. But you needn't worry about my discretion. I hope to bring back news that will make you the happiest man in California."

After repeated conferences every detail of the Wall Street campaign was agreed upon, and James Blake set his face towards the East.

"John Burt's a strange lover," mused Blake as he lounged back in a chair in John Hawkins' private car, soothed by the rhythm of the rolling wheels. "It's more than four years since he has spoken her name to me. Come to think of it, he never said that she loved him or that he loved her. Well, John loves her. A man don't shoot up young millionaires on account of passing friendships. John won't even admit that the portrait in his room is Miss Carden, but I know it is. Of course it is! I hope she's good enough for John. He's a royal fellow; a royal good fellow is John. Eight million dollars —and I'll bet he has two millions more! His mines are paying him a million and a half a year. If he has made a mistake in stocks in two years I've not heard of it. The ticker tells him all its secrets. And what has he gotten out of it? I have most of his money and all of his fame. Talk about your plots and romances and fiction; they're like counterfeit money compared with this! I suppose I'm the champion counterfeit of the universe. Suppose I should drop dead? Well I won't drop dead. If such a minor catastrophe had been decreed, John would know of it in advance. He knows everything! But this Miss Carden problem may down him. They say every man has some weak point—some Achilles' heel. Perhaps John's weak point is woman. Here's

where I may help him out. God knows he's done enough for me; perhaps this is where I pay part of the debt. Miss Jessie will marry John if I have to commit murder—that is, if John wants to marry her, and it's a sure thing he does. I wonder if she's as pretty as that picture! Ah, well; love is a tough proposition. Eight million dollars in the keeping of a pauper! The thought of it drives me to drink!"

Blake rang the bell and instructed the steward to bring him a pint of Mr. Hawkins' favorite wine. He smoked a cigar, sipped the wine slowly, dropped into a doze, and dreamed of a furious conflict with Wall Street bulls and bears, who were struggling for possession of Jessie Carden. Aided by Peter Burt he charged into their ranks and rescued the fair maiden, who smiled and greeted him, and handed him a check for eighty millions of dollars.

"That's an easy way to make money," reflected Blake as he awoke and rubbed his eyes. "If that brand of wine holds out until I reach New York, I can pay off the national debt."

He arrived in New York on Friday evening. Early the following morning he appeared in Wall Street and presented letters of introduction to the banks and brokers who had been selected by John Burt as agents in the pending operations.

Blake found that his fame had preceded him. Invitations to dinner and proffers of club privi-

leges were showered upon him, but he pleaded fatigue and sought the seclusion of his hotel.

On Monday morning he opened accounts with brokers and began selling small blocks of the two railway stocks. The market was strong, and all offerings were eagerly absorbed.

Never for a moment did Blake lose his head or betray his hand. In three days he had sold one hundred thousand shares of each stock, and the market was stationary. He wired the fact to John Burt and received instructions. The following day he began the cash sale of the stocks and securities. When half of them were sold the market began to weaken.

On Thursday morning he received a cipher telegram which, when translated, read as follows:

"Sell remainder of securities at market price, and then offer railroads A and B in five thousand lots."

J. B.

Beneath the weight of these offerings the market trembled and then broke sharply. Late in the afternoon came the news of the resignation of powerful directors on railroads A and B; the organization of a competing line, and the passage of a resolution for enormous bond issues. On Friday there came the news of a general railroad strike, and the stampede became a rout.

When James Blake went to bed late Saturday night it was after fifty hours of work without sleep. He had practically concluded one of the most deci-

sive campaigns ever waged on the Street. Before turning out the lights he again read a telegram received a few hours before, and his handsome face flushed with pleasure as he read:

"Accept my congratulations on your superb handling of our campaign. Mr. Hawkins joins in salutations and we drink your health."

J. B.

"'Our' campaign?" said Blake, half aloud. "That's the highest of compliments. I would like to plan and win the fruits of one campaign such as this. John must have won fortunes, and I'm a millionaire at last. Wonder if I can sleep. Here goes."

He dropped into a slumber deep and untroubled as that of a child.

CHAPTER TWENTY

IN STRICT CONFIDENCE

LIKE disturbed and enraged hornets, Wall Street buzzed the name of Blake for a while, and again swarmed angrily about its standards. Nothing makes a lasting impression on the collective Wall Street intellect. Should the Street survive a cataclysm, the event would be ancient history in a week, and of less moment than the morrow's bank statement.

To arouse Wall Street one must send a shock through the nerves of the financial world; he must retard or accelerate the speed of the Titanic balance-wheel of commerce. Great events produce this phenomenon—individuals seldom do. Few men succeed in riveting on themselves the concentrated gaze of Argus-eyed Speculation.

James Blake found himself the Wall Street hero of the hour. He was acclaimed the young financial giant from the Pacific Slope—a market Ivanhoe who had driven his lance through the armor of famed knights and warriors.

He drank deep of the glorious nectar of victory. The day had dawned when he could accept honors fairly won. While admitting that John Burt was the master-mind of the campaign, Blake knew that he had played no small part in its consummation. He had invested every dollar of his own. He had carried his stock to the bottom of the market and covered in time to profit on the reaction. In

a week of furious conflict he had not made a mistake.

It requires superb will-power to withstand the intoxicating fumes of success. The average man easily resists the poison of adversity. Defeat is deadened with the languor of laudanum. Success staggers with the stimulation of strychnine.

New York threw open her gates as to a victorious general, proud to be looted in honor of his fame. She became the opulent and willing mistress to his pleasures. She fanned his fevered brow and whispered soft words of praise into his ears.

He banqueted with money kings in staid old clubs; he met as an equal the dashing young scions of wealth around the boards in fashionable cafes; he drifted through drawing-rooms brilliant in light, and looked into the admiring faces of radiant women; he mingled with the jeweled throng in playhouse and opera; he read his name and the story of his fame in the public prints—and he forgot John Burt.

He spent an evening in a Fifth Avenue Club—the guest of a young banker and broker who had profited from the coup. Blake was faultlessly dressed, and his fine face was more handsome than ever. Three years spent in the cosmopolitan atmosphere of San Francisco had smoothed the rough edges without making him dully conventional. He goodnaturedly declined to discuss his triumphs in California, but told with spirit, frankness and humor

the tales of successive reverses, and modestly attributed his recent run of success to luck.

"You must transfer your activities to New York," advised young Kingsley, who had been willed several millions and a banking business. "San Francisco is too small and provincial for you. A man who can handle a deal as you did belongs near Wall Street. Ah, here comes a fellow you must meet!"

A thick-set young man had entered the room. He stood and listened with a bored expression to a friend who was enthusiastic over some matter, and persisted in repeatedly shaking hands.

"That's Morris—Arthur Morris," explained Kingsley. "Son of old Randolph Morris—don't you know. Pére Morris retired from business two weeks ago and turned everything over to Arthur. He was a wild one, but he's settled down. The Morris millions won't shrink in his hands. I want you to know him, Blake. When that idiot Smalley breaks away I'll call Morris over here. He'll be glad to meet you. You helped him make a winning last week. He happened to be on the right side of the market, and when you exploded that bomb he had sense enough to profit by it. Here he comes."

When Morris's name was mentioned Blake started and gazed intently at the stolid face and heavy figure in the far corner of the smoking-room. With shame he recalled that he had made no inquiry

concerning this man, whose death or existence meant so much to John Burt.

For a moment his nerves tingled, and he longed to walk across the room and choke Morris for John's sake, but he reflected that this was folly. It was enough to know that Morris lived. John Burt was dead—so far as Arthur Morris was concerned—and Blake, as John's reincarnation, threw himself on guard, determined to profit to the utmost by the incident. The easy air of polite interest which he assumed when the young millionaire approached was worthy of a Garrick or a Booth.

"Glad to see you, old man!" exclaimed Kingsley, rising to greet Morris. "I want you to know my friend, Mr. Blake—Mr. James Blake, of San Francisco—Mr. Arthur Morris. You certainly have heard——"

"'Pon my word this is unexpected luck!" Arthur Morris thrust forward a soft hand and winced as Blake clasped it with simulated heartiness.

"Delighted to meet you, Mr. Blake!" Morris exclaimed. "Been looking for you everywhere! Sent my card to your apartments this evening. By Jove, you're a corker, don't you know, Mr. Blake! Waiter, a bottle of Perier Gouet, '54. I want to drink your health, Mr. Blake. Had a small share in your victory—trailed along behind your triumphal car. A mere trifle of a few thousands, don't you know, but a fellow never goes broke taking profits;

eh, Mr. Blake? Deuced lucky I happened to be on the right side. Sheer chance, I assure you!"

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Morris!" said James Blake, looking him full in the eyes. "I've heard of your father, and the famous old firm, and learned only to-day that you've succeeded him in business."

John Burt had told him little concerning the man who sat by his side. From the first night spent in the old log cabin on the mountain-side until the interview which preceded Blake's departure for New York, John Burt refused to discuss the events which had made him a refugee. After one or two attempts to revert to these incidents, Blake wisely refrained from pressing the subject. By no word or sign did John display interest in Morris.

At times Blake was inclined to believe that the stern and successful pursuit of wealth had dulled John's hatred of Morris. The parting interview did little to solve the riddle.

Two years spent by Arthur Morris in an apprenticeship to the trade of money grasping and holding had seamed the puffed, round face with hard lines. The once dull eyes glowed with the newly-lighted fires of avarice. The sensuous lips dropped at the corners with a cruel curve. The former air of indifference was replaced by the alertness of defence and aggressiveness. The handling of money had quickened those mental and physical forces which respond to the clink of gold.

Close observers predicted a great career for

Arthur Morris. His father was delighted with the transformation and did not hesitate to give to his heir the keys which unlocked the Morris treasure vaults.

The hours glided by to the music of clinking glasses and the rising clatter of conversation. The twenty or more men who had clustered around the mahogany table segregated into smaller groups. Some discussed Wall Street, others declaimed on the issues of the pending election. Some waxed eloquent over art, music or amusements. Others recounted society triumphs or their successes in affairs of the heart. Yet others, under the egoistic spell of the grape, delivered monodies on that most engrossing of all topics—themselves.

And as James Blake talked and listened and drank, his aversion to Arthur Morris relaxed. Bacchus fires the passions of certain of his devotees and subdues them in others. Surely these were royal good fellows! Success and power were stamped on their faces. He loved John Burt and was eager to espouse his cause, but John had not commissioned him to quarrel with Arthur Morris. Perhaps the affair of the years before was only a boyhood dispute?

He glanced at the white expanse of Morris's shirt front and wondered if the scar of John's bullet showed over his heart. Morris lived, and the thought came to Blake that the score was even between John and the young millionaire. The feud

had made John rich—why should John complain? And Arthur Morris did not seem to be such a bad sort of a fellow after all.

Thus reasoned Blake as Morris took his arm and led him away from the noisy club men. The old-fashioned clock slowly chimed the hour of midnight.

"Say we get out of this?" said Morris, proffering a cigarette case. "Smalley is making a nuisance of himself as usual. Your friend Kingsley is nearly asleep. You'll be my guest to-night, Blake. Won't listen to a refusal, my dear fellow! I've bachelor apartments, and anything you ask is yours. I want to have a quiet chat with you. Let's make our excuses and stroll to Delmonico's for a bite of supper. Then we'll go to my rooms."

Blake accepted the invitation, and after supper they drove to the Morris apartment. Nothing had been omitted in the furnishing of these rooms. Rare old paintings and statuary vied with other adornments at the command of unrestricted fancy.

"I'm rather fond of these quarters, don't you know," said Morris, as he showed his guest through a suite worthy of a Lucullus. "Picked up some of this stuff abroad, and the governor contributed the rest of it. Rammohun, serve us that 1809 brandy!"

The Indian servant bowed and moved noiselessly away. Morris opened a writing-desk and glanced at a number of unopened letters.

"Excuse me for a moment, will you,old man?" he said. "This reminds me that I must write a short letter and have it posted to-night. It will take only a minute or two. This is my private den. Look it over or make yourself comfortable. In the meantime try this brandy. I can recommend it."

While Morris was writing, his guest strolled around the sumptuous "den." Three sides of it were lined with carved ebony cases enclosing rows of richly bound books and priceless prints. No student would have been deceived by this array. There was an ornate, orderly air which told not of learning. Imprisoned within the uncut leaves was the romance, wit, poetry, philosophy, and research of a hundred generations, swathed like mummies in gilded cartonnage. On the walls were specimens of Hogarth's cartoons, side by side with recent productions, whose sensualism lacked the questionable sanction which age gives to indecency.

In an alcove, partially formed by a bay window, stood an easel, upholding a large frame. The light struck the canvas in such a way that Blake did not recognize the subject until squarely in front of it. He saw a portrait of a young woman, garbed in a dark riding habit, a spray of golden rod fastened to her dress, and a whip carelessly held in the little hand. Folds of dark hair fell from the jaunty cap, and crowned the queenly pose of the head.

It was a portrait of Jessie Carden—not the

Jessie Carden drawn by the San Francisco artist from the faded tintype—but the Jessie Carden of later years, whose face and figure had taken on the perfect grace of womanhood. Yet the pose was exactly the same as that of the portrait Blake had admired so many times in John Burt's study room.

Amazed and lost in thought, Blake did not hear Arthur Morris as he approached and stood back of him. He flushed when Morris touched him on the shoulder.

"By Jove, that portrait must have great attraction for you!" laughed Morris. "You've been staring at it five minutes."

An inspiration came to James Blake. Always impulsive, he did not hesitate to act on the spur of the moment.

"Why, I know her!" he exclaimed. "I'm sure I know her—that is, I used to know her, years ago!"

"*You* know her? You're dreaming, old chap! You never saw her in your life! A box at the opera you cannot tell her name!"

"Done!" said Blake. "That's a portrait of Miss Carden—Miss Jessie Carden, of Boston."

An expression of dumb surprise swept across the face of Arthur Morris. With half-opened mouth and staring eyes he gazed at James Blake. The sealed letter in his hand fell to the floor.

"Well, I'll be—. Well, of all things!" He sank into a chair and laughed feebly. "I say, old

fellow, you took me off my feet! How the devil did you guess that name? What are you—a wizard? By Jove, that's the most extraordinary thing I ever heard of!"

"Nothing wonderful about it!" said Blake, who by this time had perfected his course. "I met Miss Carden years ago, I tell you, and I at once recognized the portrait. That's all there is to it."

"You met her? Where?"

"In the country, near Hingham, Massachusetts."

"How? When? By Jove, old fellow, this beats me! What were you doing in Hingham?"

"I lived on a farm near there," replied Blake. Morris leaned forward. For an instant fear had possession of him. Who was this man who lived on a farm near Hingham, and who once was acquainted with Jessie Carden? Was he John Burt?

Morris's recollection of the country boy who had brought him near death's door was vague and uncertain. He had met him only three times, and until the day of the clambake deemed him worthy of no more notice than the average country lout. But there had been burned into his mind a grim vision of certain cold gray eyes and of a firm set mouth; a flashlight of John Burt as he leaped under the revolver and grappled him in the old inn.

No, those were not John Burt's eyes, nor did the graceful moustache conceal the implacable Burt

mouth. Arthur Morris breathed an inward sigh of relief and leaned back in his chair.

"From the time I was thirteen until I ran away from home," Blake had continued, with nonchalance and confident mendacity, "I lived on a farm about three miles from the old Bishop mansion. Miss Carden used to visit there in the summer seasons and I saw her frequently. I don't suppose she would remember me. I was the son of a poor farmer, you know, and not in her class, though she was kind enough to speak to me on several occasions—picnics, country celebrations and affairs like that. You city folks stoop to address us common clay during the vacation period, and as I recall Miss Carden she was more than usually democratic, and therefore popular. The last time I saw her she cantered past our house with a friend of mine. That reminds me—dear old John—I must look him up when I go to Rocky Woods."

Blake threw back his head and reflectively exhaled a wreath of cigar smoke. Morris looked at him with an expression of mingled fear and curiosity.

"Miss Carden was about fifteen years old then," Blake added, "and she wore a riding suit much like that. I recognized the portrait instantly. Does this explain the mystery? I don't see anything wonderful about it except that you have her portrait, and that is probably easily explained. I'm not prying into your affairs, old man?"

"Not at all—not at all! Rammohun; brandy and two bottles of soda," ordered Morris, mopping his forehead. "By Jove, this is remarkable! Gad, but this is a small world! You don't understand, old man, what I'm talking about, but I'll explain after a bit. You speak of a friend of yours—John, you call him—what was his last name?"

"Burt."

"Where is he now?" Morris leaned eagerly forward, his face gray and his lower lip twitching.

"Sure, I don't know! He was with his grandfather on the old Burt farm in Rocky Woods when I left Massachusetts. I've not been there since, you know. None of my people live there now, and I've been too busy or lazy to write. Why; do you know John Burt?"

"Confound it, man, he shot me!" exclaimed Morris springing to his feet and pacing up and down the room. "He shot me, I tell you, and all but put me out for good! And he did it on account of the girl whose portrait you're admiring. The blasted cad was crazy jealous over Miss Carden, who had been so foolish as to tolerate his company. When I pushed him aside—and it was not difficult, I assure you—he picked a quarrel with me in a tavern and shot me through the left lung. Laid me up for three months. That old desperado of a grandfather of his nearly killed two officers and aided him to escape. He has not been heard of since."

"John shot you; John Burt?" Blake seemed speechless from astonishment.

"By Jove, old chap, you gave me a start, don't you know!" said Morris, with a long drawn sigh of relief. "It's ridiculous, of course, but for a moment, don't you know, I thought you were John Burt." Morris laughed nervously.

"No, I'm not John Burt," asserted Blake, with a smile that faded into a frown.

"Of course not; why, certainly not! It's absurd, and all that sort of thing!" stammered Morris. "Beg pardon, old fellow, for working myself into such beastly excitement, but it is so confounded odd that you know two persons who have played so large a part in my life—though it's a shame to mention them in the same breath." Morris looked lovingly at the portrait of Jessie Carden.

Blake plied Morris with questions. The latter took large draughts of brandy and recited the successive chapters which led to the tragedy. Except that he made himself the hero of the tale, his account agreed with that told by John Burt. Blake partook sparingly of the brandy, but Morris fed his aroused hate and recollection with the fiery fluid.

With the skill of a practiced lawyer, Blake led his host back to the subject of the portrait. For a time Morris parried these indirect questions, but under the spell of Blake's pretended sympathy and the subtle inspiration of an intoxication both mental and physical, he became garrulously confidential.

Mixed with a torrent of invective against John Burt were the fragments of a narrative which astounded and pained James Blake, but Morris had reached a point where nothing but the sound of his own voice held his attention. After hours of endless repetitions and maudlin self-laudation, he told a story which can be condensed in a few words.

According to Morris he was madly in love with Jessie Carden from the moment he saw her. Before he recovered from his wound she was sent abroad by General Carden to complete her education in Paris and Berlin. Morris corresponded with her, and called on her in Berlin. Two years later General Carden failed in business, his private fortune being wiped out in the crash. Jessie came back from Europe and remained a year with the Bishops. Arthur had induced his father to place General Carden in a salaried position with the Morris bank in New York, and he persuaded General Carden to accept a loan sufficient to defray Jessie's expenses in a second trip abroad. She was in Paris, but had completed her studies, and would return in a few weeks. He was engaged to the dear girl, but the date of the wedding had not been set. The portrait had been painted for him, with Jessie's consent, by a famous Parisian artist.

"I've told you more'n any man living," half sobbed Morris, as he leaned on James Blake's shoulder. "Even the governor—dear old governor—don't know it!"

Tears stood in his inflamed eyes and trickled down his red, blotched cheeks.

"You'll keep my secret, won't you, old chap?" he pleaded maudlinly. "You're the bes' frien' I've got in the world! People don't like me; they don't know me. You know me, Blake, old fel', don't you? I'm sen'mental—that's what makes me cry. By Jove, you'll be my bes' man at weddin'—bes' man at my weddin'—won't you?"

He lurched into a chair. The trained and alert Rammohun appeared, deftly undressed him, and solemnly conveyed him to an inner room.

"Poor John!" sighed Blake a few minutes later as the Indian servant showed him his room and softly closed the door. "Poor John! Love's a tough proposition, and I'm afraid John's on a dead card! He has waited too long."

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

BAD NEWS

WHEN Blake arrived in Hingham he felt like a stranger in a foreign land. His parents were dead and his relatives scattered. The village looked smaller than when he was a boy. The three-story business blocks, which once typified monumental architecture, were wonderfully shrunken, and the old church seemed a toy house. The only natural feature was the group of loungers on the depot platform. He recognized many of the familiar figures, whose faces and postures were unchanged in the flight of years.

"Old Bill Rawlins," the drayman, leaned against the same corner, and aimed tobacco juice, with deadly accuracy, at the same spot. Hiram Jones, the retired cobbler, and Ross Taylor—whose source of income had been a Hingham mystery for generations—were still discussing the slavery question with a fervor unabated since Blake's earliest recollections. The same baggage-man was there, his cropped beard a shade whiter, and his shoulders slightly more bowed.

None of them recognized Blake, nor had they learned of his fame. He felt himself in a living graveyard.

Securing an open carriage and a driver from a livery stable, he rode through the quiet streets and out into the country. The old farmhouse, where he had spent a miserable boyhood, looked

meaner than ever. The Norwegian woman who responded to his knock, peered at him doubtfully. In broken English she declared that she did not want to buy any sewing machines, and closed the door in his face. A mangy dog snapped at his heels and escorted him to the carriage.

"The hero's home-coming!" muttered Blake, with a grim smile. "Drive to Thomas Bishop's house," he ordered his man.

The drawn and dust-covered shutters of the old mansion told their own story. From a passing farmer Blake learned that the Bishops had moved to New York months before. Half an hour later he knocked on Peter Burt's door.

Blake had been commissioned to obtain all possible news concerning Peter Burt, but John cautioned him not to inform the old man even of his existence. John briefly explained that he had promised his grandfather not to communicate with him or with any one in the East until certain objects had been accomplished. What these objects were John did not specify, but instructed Blake to carefully guard his secret.

As a boy, Blake stood in awe and fear of the strange old man, but the years had obliterated this feeling. His knock sounded hollow on the great oaken door, and he wondered if the aged recluse yet lived. Mrs. Jasper, the housekeeper, opened the door, and Blake at once recognized her.

"How do you do, Mrs. Jasper? My name is

Blake—James Blake. I lived near here when a boy. Don't you—"

"Little Jimmy Blake! Well, of all things! I never would have known ye. Come right in—Mr. Blake."

"Is Mr. Burt here?"

"Y-e-s, but I don't know if he'll see ye," she said, hesitatingly, wiping her hands on her apron. "He don't see nobody, ye know."

"Tell him who I am, and say I'm from California," said Blake, who could think of no other introduction.

They stood in the old-fashioned parlor where Peter Burt had bound the officers the night John Burt left Rocky Woods. As Mrs. Jasper hesitated, the door leading to the sitting-room opened and Peter Burt entered. Blake could not see that he had changed a whit. Perhaps the broad shoulders were a little more bowed, but the eyes glowed with their former fire. Age had not ravished the strong face nor robbed the massive figure of its strength. He advanced to the center of the room, his eyes fixed searchingly on the face of his visitor.

Beneath the spell of those eyes James Blake—millionaire and master of finance—became a boy, with all his boyish fear of Peter Burt.

"What have you to say to me, Blake? Be seated, sir."

He motioned him to a chair, but did not offer to shake hands. Blake took a seat in an antique

rocker and shifted his legs uneasily. His self-possession evaporated. What was he to say to this old man? How was he to lie to him? He felt that those cold gray eyes were reading his secret thoughts. He had posed so long as the financial and intellectual representative of John Burt that a dual existence had become second nature, but in the presence of Peter Burt he was only James Blake.

The audacity of his deception and the grotesqueness of his position appalled him. Wearing the honors and holding the fortune won by John Burt, he had dared face the old man with lies poised on his lips. The carefully-prepared story vanished like mist before a gale. He would have given a fortune to be once more in his carriage. But he must say something.

"I just called to pay my respects, Mr. Burt," he said. His voice sounded unnatural. His chair was strangely uncomfortable. "I used to live near here, you know, Mr. Burt, and I remember you when I was a little boy. I used to play with your grandson, John Burt. I—"

"Where is John?"

The old man straightened up, his huge hands clasping the opposite arms of his chair. Blake dropped his eyes and again crossed his legs. His mouth was parched and the air seemed stifling.

"Where is John?" repeated Peter Burt in the same inflection. "Answer me, sir!"

"John—John—I don't—"

"Do not lie to me, Blake. Tell me what you know of my grandson."

"He is in California, sir!" exclaimed James Blake. When these words were uttered he felt a sensation of relief which was positively exhilarating. "He is alive and well! John is rich, Mr. Burt! He is a millionaire many times over!"

A grave smile lighted the features of Peter Burt. He closed his eyes and lay back in the chair.

"Go on; tell me about it," he said, as Blake paused.

For an hour or more the head of the firm of James Blake & Company recited the history of John Burt's career in California, and the result of the recent speculative campaign in New York. Once in a while the old man asked a question, but he made no comment until the narrative was ended.

"Your heart dominates your judgment, but that is a trait and not a fault," he said as he arose and offered his hand to James Blake. "God gives us emotions and faculties; from them we must develop character. Do not charge yourself with a broken promise to John. Say to him that I ordered you to give this information. He has kept his pact with me. I send him my blessing. Say to him that I am strong and well and happy. Say to him that his future field of work is in New York city."

Peter Burt released Blake's hand.

"You have done well to respect the confidence which John has placed in you," he continued. "You

love money, yet money has not tempted you to swerve from the path of honor. Take heed lest that which money often commands may cause you to betray your friends. There are temptations and lusts more alluring than the craving for wealth. You are nearing a crisis, Blake. Be warned by this admonition. Give my love and blessing to my grandson, and say to him that I shall see him when his fondest hopes are realized. Good-day, Blake."

Peter Burt stood in the doorway and watched until the carriage disappeared beyond the old graveyard.

"I'm glad that's ended!" said Blake to himself. "I wonder what I told the old man? Everything, I guess. Feel as if I'd been in a trance. I'm nearing a crisis, am I? Well, I'm used to crises and guess I can stand one more. Who's coming? His face looks familiar. It's Sam Rounds! Stop, driver! Hollo, Sam! How are you?"

Seated in a stylish road cart, behind a rangy, high-stepping trotter, was one of the companions of Blake's boyhood. Sam checked his horse, and, with a puzzled grin, looked into the speaker's face.

"Haou de ye dew?" he drawled, slackening the lines. "Yer face looks fee-miliar like, but ye've got the best of me, an' I don't regular forgit a face nohow. An' yer voice don't sound strange like, either. I believe I know ye! It's Jim Blake! Haou air ye, Jim? Well, well, well! Who'd a thunk it; who'd a thunk it?"

Sam reached across and shook hands with a vigor which nearly pulled Blake out of his carriage.

"Air ye the James Blake I've been readin' erbout? The one that's been givin' them New York sharps a whirl in stocks?" asked Sam.

Blake smiled and nodded his head.

"Is that so? Well, well, well! Say, I'm plumb glad to hear it!" and Sam's smiling face showed it. "I'm mighty glad Rocky Woods has turned out somethin' better'n clam diggers, hoss dealers an' circus riders. Say, you trimmed 'em up right an' proper, didn't ye? Shore, ye did! Ain't never hearn of John Burt, have ye? No? Well, he'll turn up on top some day, an' don't ye fergit, Sam Rounds allers said so. John is clean strain an' a thoroughbred, if thar ever was one. That's right! Well, I'm glad ter meet you ergain, Jim. Where be ye goin' to, Jim?"

"I'm going back to New York to-night," replied Blake. "From there I return to San Francisco, but expect soon to make New York my home."

"Is that so? I'm livin' in New York now," said Sam, handing Blake his card. "Moved there several years ago. Started in ter sell horses, an' then branched out an' went intew the provision an' commission business. Mother an' I are here on a visit fer a few days. I've been doin' fairly middlin' well in New York, Jim. When you write me, be

shore an' put 'Hon.' before my name," and Sam laughed until the rocks re-echoed his merriment.

"How is that?" asked Blake, gazing blankly at the card.

"Read what it says," insisted Sam. "I'm alderman of my deestrict, an' have just been re-elected tew a second term. Fact!"

"I congratulate you, Sam," said Blake, heartily.

"Sorry ye haven't time tew wait over an' go back with us," Sam said. "But if ye are goin' tew locate in New York, I'll see lots of ye. You must let me know when you git there. I know mother would like tew see you. We was wonderin' the other night if you was the Blake of James Blake an' Company."

"I certainly will look you up when I'm in New York," said Blake. "My regards to your mother, and say I'm sorry I didn't have time to call on her. Are you married, Sam?"

"Nop, but I has hopes," laughed Sam, gathering up the lines. "Good-bye, Jim, good-bye, an' more luck ter ye!"

"Same to you, Sam; good-bye!"

* * * * *

Ten days later James Blake arrived in San Francisco. His train was delayed, and the hour was late, but he drove to John's apartment, and was greeted by him in the old study room. Blake sat where he looked at the portrait of Jessie Carden. His heart sank within him. How could he break

the news to his friend? John heartily congratulated Blake on his masterly generalship.

"We will talk business to-morrow, Jim," he said. "I am more anxious to hear of other matters. Now, tell me the news. Did you hear of Miss Carden? Is my grandfather alive?"

"Peter Burt is alive and well," said Blake, glad to bring some good tidings.

"Alive and well," repeated John Burt. "May God bless him! You saw him, did you, Jim? How I long to meet him again! That is good news. Go on, Jim."

"Arthur Morris is alive," said Blake, without lifting his eyes.

"The local papers contained that news," observed John, carelessly. "The day after you left for New York announcement was made of his succession to the management of the business of Randolph Morris & Company. Did you see him, Jim? How does he stand in New York? What's the matter, old man? You're pale. Are you ill?"

"I'm all right, John."

The portrait of Jessie Carden filled his vision, and he turned so that he could not see it.

"I've bad news for you, John," he said, desperately. "I may as well tell you and be over with it. Miss Carden's engaged to be married!"

John's lip tightened and a red spot burned on his cheek.

"To whom?" His hands clutched the arms

of his chair, and his attitude was the same as that of Peter Burt's when he demanded news of his grandson.

"To Arthur Morris, John."

"It's a lie—an infamous, damnable lie!"

John Burt sprang to his feet, hurling the chair backward with a crash as his hands relaxed their tension. He strode forward, his eyes blazing with fury and his features convulsed with passion.

"It's a lie, Blake—it's a lie, and you know it's a lie!"

He towered above his astonished friend. His fingers were clenched and his lips twitched. Turning abruptly, he walked across the room with his hands pressed over his forehead. For a moment he stood silent, then abruptly turned to Blake with his hands outstretched.

"I beg your pardon, Jim! Forgive me, old man! I didn't know what I was saying. Forgive me, Jim, will you?"

"Certainly, John, but there's nothing to forgive," replied Blake heartily as he grasped his friend's hands. "It's my fault, anyhow. I'm a fool. I always blurt things out. Perhaps it is a lie. Let us hope so, John."

For moments no word was spoken. John Burt stood by an opened window, with his back to his friend, and gazed out into the darkness.

"Tell me all about it, Jim." he said, breaking the silence. The grave face and deep gray eyes

betrayed no trace of the storm which had swept over him.

Blake related the details of his introduction to Arthur Morris and told of the night spent in the latter's apartment. He repeated the conversation as nearly as he could recall it. He had seen Morris again for a few minutes on his return from Hingham.

"He didn't revert to the subject except to apologize for drinking too much," explained Blake. "He asked me what he had said and I assured him my mind was a blank on that subject, and that I couldn't even remember how or when I retired. He was pleased at this and we parted great friends. I sounded his chum Kingsley, and also a chap named Ridgway. Morris has told them substantially the same thing, and I judge under about the same circumstances. It seems to be a case of *in vino veritas* —which is the only Latin quotation I know."

John abruptly changed the subject and questioned Blake about his interview with Peter Burt, and smiled quietly when he related his experience with the old man. He was not displeased that Blake had been forced to reveal his secret.

"I have anticipated his advice about going to New York," said John. "My plans are made, and if you are willing, we will make New York the future headquarters of James Blake & Company, with the San Francisco establishment a branch house. Matthews is capable of handling the business there.

Think it over, Jim, and let me know your decision as soon as possible."

"I've thought it over," said Blake. "I'm ready to go to New York the minute you say so."

"Very well, we'll go this month," said John Burt.

It was long past midnight when Blake drove away and left John Burt to the harrowing society of his thoughts. For hours he sat before the portrait of Jessie Carden. He recalled the day when she had laughingly placed the cherished tintype in his hand. And now she was in Paris, by the grace and under the bounty of Arthur Morris—the one man in all the world he hated. And her portrait—fairer than the one before him—adorned the rooms of this man. In his vision he saw her glorified by the loving touch of the years; radiant in face and figure, and enhanced by the charms of a cultured mind—Jessie Carden—his Jessie Carden—the affianced bride of Arthur Morris!

"It's a lie—an infamous, damnable lie!" he repeated as he paced up and down the room. "It is not so—it shall not be so!"

But the black clouds of doubt again obscured the rift made by vehement hope. What reason had he to doubt the statement made by Morris? Marshall Carden's fortune had been swept away, and he was practically a pensioner on the Morris fortunes. Arthur Morris had succeeded to the management of his father's affairs. Was it not natural that

General Carden should look with favor on the young millionaire's suit? Had not Morris wealth, influence, social standing? Was not Jessie under obligations to him?

And what of Jessie? What valid, lasting claim had he on Jessie Carden? A few words spoken under the stress of great excitement, a promise of her friendship and of her prayers—nothing more.

She had given him no assurance of her love. When last he saw Jessie she was in her teens—a laughing, careless schoolgirl, who enjoyed his company, but whose heart knew nothing of love. True, she had thrown her arms around his neck and kissed him as they parted in the night-shadows of the old maples, but—but that was years before. Tears came to his eyes as again he lived those sweet moments.

No word from him had come to her during these years. For all she knew he was dead. What right had he to expect that she should play the part of Penelope to a silent, untrothed Ulysses who refused to return from exile? Doubtless her life had been shadowed by her father's misfortunes. Doubtless her love for him was such that she was willing to make the sacrifice—if sacrifice it were—of a marriage with Arthur Morris. This suggested a train of bitter conjecture.

Why had he not been content with a modest fortune? Why had he devoted years to the amassing of wealth which now mocked his love? Why

had he despised the pretensions of Arthur Morris? Why had he failed to take steps to positively ascertain the result of Morris's wound? Why had he relied on the prediction of a half-crazed old man? Again, why should he aspire to the love of a woman who was ready to throw herself into the arms of a besotted millionaire? The clock on the mantel angrily ticked, "Why?" "Why?" "Why?" "Why?"

The brain of an intelligent man sits as a judge and listens to the evidence presented by the passions and prejudices, and weighs it against the calmer pleading of the judgment. No human being can stifle the voices of evil or unjust thoughts, but a just mind can ignore them with a decision which leads to action. The raucous notes of jealousy died away; the strident assertions of selfish hope were stilled, and with open heart and calm brain John Burt sought the path he should follow.

The words of Peter Burt came back to him: "It is written in God's word: 'If thou faint in the day of adversity thy strength is small; for a just man falleth seven times and riseth up again!'" Had he fallen seven times? From the hour he left the old man's side until that night, no shade of disappointment had come into his life. Success had followed success and triumph had succeeded triumph. Every prophecy made by Peter Burt had been more than fulfilled.

As he recalled the past he remembered with

keen joy the parting words of the old man: "You have the love of a woman I respect. *She will wait for you.* Do not let the impatience of your love imperil your chances."

The sense of coming victory stole over him as he stood before the portrait and repeated the words: "She will wait for you; she will wait for you." That which is not menaced; that which does not demand the danger and turmoil of a battle, is not worth struggling for.

The thought came, as he gazed at the pure profile of the face in the portrait, that fate had strangely reversed their positions. Jessie Carden was no longer an heiress. She was dependent on the patronage of others. He could not believe her capable of marrying Arthur Morris for money. Would she wed John Burt for money? He had aspired to meet and win her as an equal. In a monetary way their stations were now farther removed than ever.

He imagined the scorn of this penniless girl when he laid his vulgar millions at her feet. She did not wish a purchased love; he did not desire a bartered triumph.

The edges of the drawn curtains were tinged with the deep blue light of dawn. He raised them, opened the windows, and drank in the cool, pure air of a California morning. Birds twittered in the trees, and the idle babble of a brook sounded musical as an accompaniment. Leaping lightly to

the lawn, he strolled to an open space and saw the sun scale the distant range and melt the thin clouds into a perfect sky.

* * * * *

Four weeks later John Burt stood on a ferry-boat and gazed for the first time on the matchless water front and the ragged but impressive sky-line of New York city.

John Burt approached New York as an unheralded conqueror. Within the guarded vaults of the metropolis his millions reposed. His unseen hands had shaken Wall Street, and his secret influence helped to shape the financial map of a continent.

Yet he was unknown. In that swarming mass of people only one human being knew that John Burt lived.

Blake had preceded him, and had installed the permanent headquarters of James Blake & Company. He met John as he stepped from the train. The two old friends greeted each other with unfeigned cordiality. Blake was in high spirits.

"I'm glad you're here, John," he said, as they were seated in a carriage. "I've been in an awful fix for a week or more. What in thunder is my opinion on the new currency bill, John? Ten reporters and a hundred financiers have asked me that question, and I have refused to commit myself. New York and Washington long to know how James Blake stands on this burning issue. What shall I tell them, John?"

"We'll discuss that over dinner," laughed John. He gazed at Blake earnestly, and asked: "Do you know if Miss Carden has returned?"

"I have been unable to ascertain that," said Blake. "I haven't seen—anybody—anybody who would know. I've been awfully busy, John."

"I know you have," returned John, in his old, cordial manner. "Have you secured a hut for me, Jim?"

"I have fitted up a dream of an apartment for you, and have ordered your favorite dinner."

The following day John Burt began his New York career.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

A FOREIGN MISSION

IN the world of finance Arthur Morris was a trapper. With instinctive cunning, he set snares and dug pitfalls along the paths trod by the unwary. The legitimate profits of plain dealing had no attraction for him. He lacked the courage of the Nimrod who meets his unfettered prey in the open, and who experiences a keen delight in the resistance of his quarry. He preferred to work in the dark, and to shoot from ambush. He had at times the patience of the fisherman, who relies on a well-baited hook, or of the hunter, who, behind a blind, waits for flying ducks to mingle with his painted decoys.

Arthur Morris was a firm believer in the innate dishonesty of mankind. He held that all the world was in a conspiracy to despoil him; and affirmed that any means of reprisal were justifiable. His favorite motto was: "Everybody and everything has a price—get the price." He weighed fellowship, sentiment, friendship and love in the same scales with gold, and found many who applauded his system.

In this hurried sketch of Arthur Morris no attempt is made to depict an abnormal character or to create an imaginary villain. He was no better nor worse than thousands contemporaneous with him, or who exist to-day, and who will live in the future. Like others of his class, he inherited

wealth without culture, and selfishness without sentiment.

When a hog is bequeathed the strength of a lion he uses it as a hog. If the massing of wealth in the hands of a few individuals be decided necessary for the future good of society, its holders should be selected by civil service examination, and not by the whims of heredity.

By no use of that much abused word "love" was it possible for Arthur Morris to love anything, much more a woman. That fine selfishness which longs to make sacrifices for others; which gives for the pleasure of giving, and which suffers for the happiness of suffering, was foreign to Arthur Morris. Devoid of introspection, and unskilled in the exact use of words, he thought that he loved Jessie Carden, when in fact the sensation was that of covetousness. He wanted her. He was ambitious to add her to his possessions. He was annoyed that his infatuation was so great that he was willing —and in fact eager—to give her his name. This was a sacrifice, a concession, and he hated to yield a point, but he realized that it was necessary.

"Marriage is such a beastly conventional thing, don't you know," he observed to Blakely, on one of the few occasions when he discussed other than material questions. "By Jove, old chap, I sometimes think, don't you know, that a gentleman never should marry. Loses his independence, and all that sort of thing, don't you know. That

French chap Monte—Monte—what's his name? —or perhaps it was some one else; anyhow, he had the right idea, don't you know. Marriage is all right for the lower classes. It's good enough for them and more than they deserve, but it restricts a gentleman, don't you know, Blakely."

"Never thought of it before, commodore," said Blakely with a smile. "You think it's bad form, eh? Perhaps you're right. Why don't you write a book about it? Call it 'Morris on Marriage.' Corking good title! Euphonious and alliterative. 'Morris on Marriage; or Musings on Mediaeval and Modern Matrimony'—how is that for a warm title? You might have your French friend Monte, what's his name, write the introduction. It would make a hit, commodore."

Before Morris had recovered from his wound, Jessie Carden had left for Europe. During his convalescence he was consumed by two passions: first to arrest and punish John Burt, and second to see or hear from Jessie Carden. Yielding to his demands, the elder Morris spent thousands of dollars in a fruitless attempt to locate John Burt. The officers had followed him to Peter Burt's, but no trace of him was found after that night. The old man was arrested, and though vigorously prosecuted, was discharged by the judge, who reprimanded the officers for attempting to enter his house without a warrant.

Morris had no difficulty in obtaining from

General Carden the continental address of his daughter. She was studying in Berlin, and Arthur Morris wrote a long letter informing her of his complete recovery. He calmly ignored the events which led to the shooting, and seemed to have forgotten the rebuff he had received at her hands. The letter read as if their last meeting had been under the shadow of the maples on the Bishop lawn.

"Every effort is being made to locate that young desperado John Burt," he wrote, "but thus far he has evaded the officers of the law. Though the affair resulted seriously to me, I cannot help but laugh at the presumption of this countryman, who, it seems, was insanely jealous over our friendship. With his usual foresight, my dear father effectually suppressed any mention of your name. I doubt if either of us ever see this fellow Burt again, and I am sure we can endure his absence with complacency. I am thankful that his homicidal mania was not directed against you. As you may have heard, there is a taint of insanity in his family, and they say that his grandfather has killed a score of men. But this is enough on a mutually disagreeable subject, and I promise you, Miss Carden, not to refer to it again. I wish you could have been present at our closing reception," etc., etc.

Morris waited a month for an answer to this letter and then wrote a second one, which was returned unopened. In a towering passion he went to his father and unbosomed the story of his treatment.

"You told me once that old Carden would go broke on L. & O.," he declared, pacing up and down the room. "I didn't pay much attention to what you said at the time, but I know all about it now. I've been looking over your books, governor. You've got him long on a rotten stock. Go ahead and squeeze him! You can do it. Put the screws to him! Then when he comes whining around for mercy we'll see what Miss Independence Jessie will do! I'll bet she'll answer my letters then! I'll make her pay for this some day. You've got to do something, governor!"

"If you think I'm going to run my banking and Wall Street business so as to promote your correspondence with a doll-faced girl, you—"

"She's not a doll-faced girl!" declared Morris, turning fiercely on his father.

"Well, she's a girl, and they're all alike," growled Randolph Morris. "The prettier they are the more trouble they raise. I thought you told me you wasn't going to marry her? Didn't I tell you she won't have a dollar—not one dollar? You're an ass."

The old banker lay back wearily in his chair and regarded his son and heir with an expression of deep disgust.

"I'll marry her if I want to," said Morris, doggedly. "I suppose I've got to marry somebody and she's as good as any one. What the devil has old Carden's money got to do about it? When he

loses it you get it, and when you die I get it, and if she marries me she quits even. It's the only chance she's got. Go ahead and squeeze him, governor!"

"You talk like a fool," said the fond parent. "You know a lot about stocks, don't you? I couldn't bear L. & O. now if I tried, and wouldn't if I could. I'm interested in other stocks besides L. & O. You attend to your own business, if you have any, and keep your nose out of my books. If you're bound to marry, why don't you marry Thompson's daughter. He'll die in a year and leave her four millions."

"I don't want her," said Morris loftily. "You need not worry about my matrimonial alliances. Let me have five thousand dollars. I'm going to Europe."

Randolph Morris stormed and fumed and then wrote a cheque for the amount demanded.

Six weeks later Arthur Morris was in Berlin. He had perfected his plans, and after securing apartments in Leipziger Strasse set about their execution.

He was too shrewd to announce his arrival by a letter to Jessie, having good reason to suspect that it would meet the same reception as had the others. He retained a capable valet and commissioned him to obtain information concerning Miss Carden's daily and weekly routine. He had no trouble in influencing a servant to tell all she knew of Miss Carden's regular engagements.

It rained the following day, and Morris's valet brought word that Miss Carden would not venture out in the storm. His master was pleased to learn that Miss Carden was in the habit of going alone, and that if the weather permitted, she proposed to visit Count Raczynski's gallery on the morrow.

Berlin is dreary on a rainy day, and Morris spent the hours nursing his impatience and practicing the phrases he proposed to deliver when he met Jessie face to face. He paced up and down his room, doffed his hat, smiled and bowed to an imaginary Miss Carden. He conjured her in various moods, and framed responses to meet all contingencies his limited imagination could invent.

The famous Raczynski gallery is on the Exercierplatz, outside the Bradenburg gate, and contains a splendid collection of modern German paintings. The day dawned bright and warm after the storm, and Morris was in fine spirits when he stepped into his carriage and rode down the avenue. He entered the gallery and roamed through the halls to make sure Jessie had not arrived. He then stood near the entrance and waited.

His patience was rewarded. He recognized Jessie as she crossed the street. She was alone, and Morris stepped into the dark of the vestibule and followed when she entered the main hall. Jessie carried a sketch book under her arm, and took a seat opposite one of Schinkel's masterworks. Opening the book, she proceeded to work

on an unfinished sketch, and in a moment was oblivious to everything except the superb painting before her.

This was a situation for which Morris had not provided, but he deemed it singularly propitious. There were only a few persons in the hall. Two students were hard at work in the opposite quarter of the room. A near-sighted Russian, with enormous glasses, was bent in a half-circle as he leaned forward to study the works of art. An Italian, with half-closed eyes fixed intently on a Rauch statue, was motionless as the marble figure which held his rapt attention. A subdued, even light filled the room.

Under no circumstances could these cherished heirlooms of genius have appealed to Arthur Morris. This atmosphere of symbolism, this Parnassus of art, meant nothing to him, nor did he have the tact to realize that he could not have chosen a moment more intrusive and inauspicious for the pleading of his cause. He only knew that the opportunity he had awaited for months was at hand. For this he had traveled thousands of miles, spurred on by impatience and lashed by wounded pride.

He stood a few steps back of Jessie and devoured her with his eyes. With wistful gaze he studied the perfect profile of her cheek as she turned her head to look at the canvas. He noted the soft folds of her hair, the rounded curves of her neck, and as one spell-bound watched her deft

fingers as they glided over the surface of the sketch book.

With a little sigh of disappointment Jessie dropped the folio on her lap. Not in months had she drawn with less skill. The perspective was wrong, and the draughting atrocious. And she had been so sure of her subject. She would not dare show so sad a botch to Professor Riedesel. What could be the matter? She felt oppressed and under some malign influence. Instinctively she turned and looked squarely into the ardent eyes and eager face of Arthur Morris. With an involuntary cry of surprise, fear and vexation, she sprang to her feet, the sketch book falling to the floor.

"Why, Miss Carden!" exclaimed Morris, with simulated astonishment. "Really, this is an unexpected pleasure. I am delighted to meet you. Permit me—." And he picked up the sketch book, bowed, and extended his hand.

In these brief seconds Jessie had regained her self-possession. By an effort she withstood the wave of indignation which swept over her. As the sound of Morris's grating voice broke the accustomed quiet of the room, the Italian awoke from his reverie, and directed an annoyed look at the speaker. The students glanced curiously in his direction. Jessie's lip trembled and two crimson spots burned on her cheeks, but she spoke calmly.

"You have surprised me, Mr. Morris," she said quietly, ignoring his proffered hand. "You

must be aware that this is not a public reception-room. We can talk without disturbing any one in the lobby."

A minute later they were in the comparatively deserted outer hall.

"My carriage is at the door and at your service," said Morris effusively as Jessie paused near the entrance. "Really, Miss Carden, you cannot imagine how delighted I am to meet you."

"You have no right to follow me here or to annoy me by your attentions," said Jessie Carden, confronting him with flashing eyes. The smug, complacent smile died on his lips. He fumbled nervously at his watch charm.

"It was purely accidental, I assure you," he stammered. "I was strolling around and was as much surprised to see you as you were to see me."

"Your arrival was announced in the Berlin papers," said Jessie coldly. "I learned this morning that you bribed my servants, and realized that an interview with you was inevitable, but I did not think you would presume to intrude your presence during my study hours. You take an unfair advantage of an accidental acquaintance. That acquaintance was terminated last summer by your acts and conduct, and I have no desire to renew it. You have had the education and opportunities of a gentleman and must respect my wishes."

She turned and entered the gallery. Morris stood as if riveted to the floor—dazed, ashen-faced

and speechless. Obeying a wild impulse he rushed after her, but halted at the door. With a smothered oath he retraced his steps, and hailing his coachman drove through Unter der Linden. The matchless beauties of this famous boulevard, with its giant trees and enclosing palaces had no charms for him.

For the second time in his life the fact had been forced upon him that there were ambitions beyond the reach of his money. The thought envenomed him. Again he made a vow that Jessie Carden should be his. His admiration for her was enhanced by her resistance. Never had she looked more beautiful than on that afternoon when she spurned his addresses. Here was a spirited subject for bit, whip and spur—his bit, his whip and his spur. His heavy lips parted in a sullen smile as he pictured Jessie Carden's surrender. The longer it was delayed the sweeter would be his triumph.

The morning train for Paris had Arthur Morris for a passenger. There he found congenial friends, and plunging into the saturnalian current of the gay metropolis found respite from his sorrows and solace for his defeats.

It was months before he returned to New York to become a junior partner in the firm of Randolph Morris & Company.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

DIPLOMACY

AFTER an absence of two years Jessie Carden looked forward with pleasure to a home-coming. Her studies in Berlin were ended, and Professor Reidesel departed from his established rule and openly praised her work. Charmed by her beauty, the famous Steinbech craved and obtained permission to paint her portrait, which he presented to her on behalf of her tutors and fellow-students. General Carden was a proud and happy father when he received the portrait, and gave it the place of honor in his drawing-room.

Jessie had bidden her instructors and friends adieu, and was about leaving Berlin for a brief visit to Paris, when she received a cablegram from General Carden, requesting her to return home at once. The message was so worded that Jessie was mystified, but not alarmed.

After a stormy voyage, the liner steamed into Boston harbor, and General Carden clasped his daughter in his arms. At first glance she hardly recognized him. His face was drawn, and the dark hair and beard had turned to silver-gray. The color left Jessie's face as she looked into his.

"You will be brave, my pet," he said, his voice choked with emotion. "I have sad news for you, Jessie."

"There can be no very sad news, papa dear, so long as you are alive," said Jessie. With a woman's

intuition she guessed the truth. Like a flash the interview in the old grape arbor came back to her.

"I am ruined, Jessie! My bank has failed, and my fortune is swept away. That is not all. Our old home is in the hands of creditors and I am a bankrupt—a bankrupt at the age of fifty."

Jessie smiled bravely through her tears.

"I am distressed on your account, papa dear, but you must not worry in the least over me. I have money, papa; lots and lots of money. I have saved nearly two thousand dollars out of my allowance. We shall get along famously. I can more than earn my own living, and I shall see that you grow young again and regain all that you have lost."

That evening, in the modest apartments he had rented, General Carden told Jessie the story of his downfall. The unexpected depreciation of a certain stock, coupled with heavy demands on his bank, had forced him to the wall. Randolph Morris was his principal creditor, and negotiations were then in progress by which he hoped to transfer his L. & O. stock to Mr. Morris, in consideration of a loan which would enable him to settle with his minor creditors.

"If Mr. Morris refuses to extend this accommodation I shall be in lasting disgrace," faltered General Carden. "Your Aunt Helen and her husband, Thomas Bishop, have large sums deposited with me. Many of my personal friends and old

army comrades have trusted me with every dollar they possessed. If Mr. Morris consents to make this loan I can meet these obligations, face the world, and begin the fight anew. Arthur Morris is now a member of the firm, and the matter has been placed in his hands. I regret this exceedingly. Arthur seems to have conceived a dislike for me, and, while he has not rejected my proposition, he treats me coldly. We will talk no more of it, Jessie, my pet. Let us hope for the best. I never thought, my little girl, that a time would come when you would have to worry over my financial affairs."

Jessie Carden had listened quietly. Until that day she had given little thought to the problem which ever confronts the great mass of mankind—how shall we live, wherewithal shall we be fed, clothed and housed? She knew, or at least thought she knew, what poverty meant—for others—but it never had occurred to her that a day could come when the springs of affluence would run dry.

She looked at her father's pale and anxious face, and saw him run his hand nervously through his whitened locks. The little room in which they sat looked mean and want-haunted. The faded carpet, the cheap wallpaper, the tawdry decorations, the low and marred ceiling, the wailing of a sick child through the thin partition, the odor of a kitchen, the rumble of traffic over a cobblestone pavement—surely this was a dream from which she

would awaken to find herself in the stately mansion on the great boulevard.

The dear old home was as vivid to her as on the day she left for Europe. She could see her room looking out on the Charles River; the climbing ivy softly seeking an entrance—the green lawns with their fountains, the gentle voices of the old servants who loved and petted her, the great brown eyes of the horses, as they lifted their heads when she entered their stables, the quaint homestead with its hallowed recollections of three generations, the fashionable calm of an exclusive neighborhood—surely these had not gone from her forever.

Yet it was not a dream. At the sound of the name of Arthur Morris the past and the present stood before her in glaring colors. She must be brave; she would be brave. She realized that she was no longer a girl; she was a woman, and would play a woman's part. But how? She thought of Morris and shuddered.

With that superb insight which nature gives to woman, the plot devised by Arthur Morris lay bare before her eyes. Her father was enmeshed in the net which had been set for her. To release him must she be caught in the toils?

The gentle doe at bay will fight. The most docile of God's creatures arouses at times to resist the hand of cruelty. The dormant faculties of defence which are planted in every woman's heart, spring on guard when the gentler traits are trampled

under foot, and when those she loves are threatened with defeat or suffering.

The Bishops had purchased a residence in New York, and there was waiting for Jessie a letter from her aunt inviting her to spend April and May with them in the metropolis, and to be their guest in Hingham during the summer.

"Your uncle Thomas and myself will be delighted if you make our home yours until General Carden has settled his affairs," wrote her aunt. "I have asked your father and he gladly gives his consent, though I know it to be a sacrifice for him. You will like New York and will thoroughly enjoy yourself."

General Carden advised her to accept the invitation, but Jessie had at first declared that her place was with him, and would not listen to his arguments.

"I have changed my mind about aunt Helen's invitation," she said, later in the evening. "You must not think me undutiful, papa, but I have decided to go to New York for a few weeks at least. I believe I can sell some of my sketches and paintings there, and—and—well, I think it best to go."

"You are a wise little girl, Jessie," said General Carden. "I shall be in New York nearly as much as in Boston, and you will be much happier there."

A week later Jessie was fondly greeted by her

aunt. Her charming cousin, Edith Hancock, was also a visitor in the Madison Avenue mansion. Thomas Bishop belonged to an old New York family, and was proud to introduce his beautiful nieces to the exclusive society circles in which the Bishops had been welcomed. He would not listen to Jessie's plan of selling her pictures, and in the maze of receptions, balls and theatre parties, which followed her arrival, Jessie postponed that doubtful project.

It was at the Cregier reception that she again met Arthur Morris. Not until the hostess had pronounced Jessie's name in presenting Morris did that dazed young millionaire fully recognize her. He had thought her interesting in Hingham, and fascinating in Berlin—even though gowned in the quiet habit of a student—but not until that night was the matchless beauty of Jessie Carden set in a frame which did it justice. Her ball gown was of soft, white silk, and around her neck were the famous Hancock pearls, once worn by her mother, and by her grandmother before her.

The mass of dark brown hair lay in glossy folds above the perfect brow. The dark eyes glowed with that beauty which comes from a cultured mind. The clinging fabric of her gown revealed the slender, graceful and rounded outlines of virile youth—no longer the broken curves of spring, but the rare symmetry of nascent summer.

For a moment Morris was unable to speak,

and gazed blankly, first at Jessie and then at Mrs. Cregier.

"Really—why, really—why—why, don't you know, Mrs. Cregier, Miss Carden and I have met before!" he exclaimed. "In fact—why, in fact we are old acquaintances; are we not, Miss Carden?"

"I recall having met Mr. Morris," said Jessie, addressing her hostess. Her voice and manner indicated polite lack of interest.

"I am always making the stupid blunder of introducing old friends," laughed the busy and preoccupied Mrs. Cregier. At that moment her daughter announced arriving guests, and smilingly excusing herself, Mrs. Cregier turned to greet the new comers.

It was a trying moment for Jessie Carden. Before her stood the man she hated. Why had fate cast him as a reptile ever crawling across her path? She longed to crush the serpent's head with her tiny heel, yet she knew that the snake had cunning; she knew that her father was caught in his coils. Never until that moment did she realize the damning power of money, or sound the depths of a woman's hatred.

To spurn Arthur Morris, to satisfy her pride, and to feed her revenge were the desires which flamed in her mind, burned on her cheeks and trembled on her lips. In that moment it required all of her self-possession to restrain this impulse. But the careworn face of her father, and the thought of

his humbled pride, came back to her. She would fight his battles with a woman's weapons. For his dear sake, she would act a distasteful part.

"May I say something to you, Miss Carden?" ventured Morris. "I've wished to talk to you for a long time, or rather to write something, but—but—let's get out of this crush so I can explain myself."

"I do not care to listen to you, sir."

"I beg of you, hear me for a moment!" pleaded Morris, as Jessie turned haughtily from him.

"Since you seem determined to create a scene in which I am to be involved, I prefer the less conspicuous disgrace of listening to you," she said, bitterly. "Here is a quiet corner. What have you to say to me, sir?"

"I want to apologize for what I did in Berlin, or rather for coming to Berlin," he began. "I know I had no right, after you returned my letter, to intrude the way I did, but I wished to see you awfully, Miss Carden, and was ass enough to think that—well, to think that you wouldn't care. I was wrong, and I beg your pardon."

"That is not the offence for which you should crave forgiveness," said Jessie Carden. Scorn was in her voice and a warning flash in her eyes. "Your intrusion in Berlin was insolent, but it was in harmony with a greater affront which preceded it, and one of which no gentleman would be guilty. If it has passed out of your recollection, I shall not recall

it. If you have nothing more appropriate to say, leave me, sir!"

"I have; I have!" cried Morris, cowering before her gaze. "Pray be seated, Miss Carden, and—and give me a chance!"

"I should not," she said coldly.

"I know the time you mean, Miss Carden." His face flushed a deeper red and he looked at her with appealing eyes. "You mean that affair at the clambake. I was intoxicated, Miss Carden. It's a hard word, but I'm going to be honest and throw myself on your mercy. I drank too much wine, and I don't know what I said or did after I came ashore from the Voltaire. But I couldn't have said anything against you, because, don't you know—well, because I thought too much of you. I wanted to explain this in Berlin, but you wouldn't let me. If you'll forgive me now, Miss Carden, I promise you that I will never be in that condition again. If we were alone I would get on my knees and ask your pardon, but I can't do it here, don't you know. I am very, very sorry; really I am, Miss Carden, and I want to be your—your friend."

She longed to spurn his prayers and to ask him to take back the white locks from above her father's brow and remove the stain of his disgrace. She longed to demand of him the return from exile of the man who had resented his insults; who had risked his life and imperiled his future in her defense. She realized that the man who had crushed

her father was now in her power, and felt that triumphant joy which only a woman can know. But it wounded and tortured her pride to think that Morris dared aspire to her love. She charged the sacrifice she was about to make against the account of a future revenge, and turned to him with a softer light in her eyes.

"I should not forgive you," she said. "When a man who pretends to your position so far forgets himself, he should first obtain his own pardon. He should then seek to redress the wrongs caused by his offense. Are you prepared to do that, Mr. Morris?"

"I don't exactly understand what you mean, Miss Carden."

"I will make myself plain," said Jessie. "You attempted to murder a young man who resented your insults in a public place, and in the encounter you were injured. For years you have had a standing reward for the arrest of this innocent man. Believing that you were dead, or having good reason to fear the power of your money and influence, and preferring not to blight his career on account of it, he has remained in exile, with an unjust charge hanging over him. Are you willing to take steps to absolve him? John Burt has been the greater victim of your conduct."

"But my dear Miss Carden, I haven't the slightest notion of where he is, don't you know," said Morris with a puzzled expression. "'Pon my

word, I don't. We had a beastly row in which I got shot, and all the fellows who were with me say I started it, and that the pistol went off in my own hand. I assure you that I don't remember a thing about it. The governor offered the reward. I can get him to withdraw it, and put a notice in the papers promising that no prosecution shall be made. I haven't anything against that chap Burt, 'pon my word I haven't. He was out of our class, and all that sort of thing, don't you know, Miss Carden. He might be a very decent sort of a fellow, after all, and it's thoughtful of you to remind me of this. I'll do anything you say, Miss Carden."

"Publicly announce the withdrawal of the reward and state that he will not be prosecuted," said Jessie, as if the matter was merely one of abstract justice. "It seems to have been decreed that we shall be thrown into one another's society, and if you are confident that I shall not again be embarrassed by your indiscretions I will try to overlook the past."

"You are very good!" he exclaimed, effusively. "It's more than I deserve, but you will not regret it, Miss Carden. My governor and yours are mixed up in business, and it's a beastly shame, don't you know, that we should be at odds. By the way, I'm awfully sorry about the general's financial troubles. Hope he pulls out of them all right, and think he will. I'm trying now to make a deal which will help him out. And you're not angry with me now,

are you, Miss Carden? Let's shake hands and call it square?"

Morris extended a clammy hand, and Jessie, with an inward shudder, permitted him to clasp her's for a moment. Her cousin, "Bert" Hancock, approached and claimed her for a dance.

For weeks Morris contrived to be present at most of the social functions attended by Jessie Carden. He apparently so far reinstated himself in her favor as to be permitted to call at the Bishop residence. His habits during this period were beyond reproach, and his friend Kingsley asserted that he was growing good-looking.

"You must be in love, commodore," he declared. "It's either love or lithia—perhaps both. By Jove, you're looking fine, old man! Think I'll quit myself."

Morris grinned his pleasure and revelled in the soft impeachment.

The summer season was at hand, and Jessie was looking forward with pleasure to a sojourn in Hingham. Arthur Morris had been devoted in his attentions, and Jessie felt a thrilling wickedness at the tacit encouragement she had given him. He was her escort to theatres and receptions. She had permitted him to monopolize her company. Edith Hancock returned to New York, and Jessie made of her a confidant.

"I never dreamed I could be so deceitful," she admitted to Edith, who had bluntly asked if she

were engaged to Morris. "I feel so wicked that I hardly dare look papa in the face. You know papa really thinks I like Arthur Morris, and it almost breaks my heart to know he is willing I should marry him. It's horrible, Edith, horrible!"

The expression of contrition died out and the dark eyes flashed defiantly.

"I suppose I should imitate the timid maiden of fiction and submit to the scheming of a monied villain, until rescued by some adventitious hero," declared Jessie, bitterly. "But it is in no sense likely that a hero will come to my relief. I shall not wait for one, and must wage my own battles. It is modern and accordingly drearily unromantic. Mr. Morris is holding his wealth as a weapon over papa's head, and in their commercial transactions I am rated as having a certain collateral value. I am to fold my hands, close my eyes and tacitly assent to the terms agreed upon. Papa has debts, Mr. Morris has money, and I am alleged to have beauty. I hate money. I hate Arthur Morris, and I intend to punish him for his insolence. He has deceived and swindled us, he holds possession of our home, has smirched our good name, and now I am to be thrown in to make full the measure of his profit. And he really thinks I should be delighted with the bargain! This is my romance, Edith, but I do not intend it shall be a tragedy. You are the one person in the world to whom I can tell my troubles or come for sympathy."

Edith kissed away the two mad little tears which glistened in Jessie's eyes.

That evening Arthur Morris called on Jessie. Of her favorable answer to his suit he had not the slightest doubt. He had carefully rehearsed his avowal. After critically reviewing his campaign since quitting Paris he decided that he had made no mistakes.

"It has worked out like the moves on a chessboard, and I have captured this queen," he mused triumphantly on his way to the Bishop residence. "She wouldn't listen to me as long as old Carden had money, and the governor took that away from him. That crippled her fight. Money's the thing! Love is all right in its place, but money pays the bills. I own the fastest horse on the track, the swiftest yacht on the Hudson, and now I am to have the prettiest bride in New York. She's a bit high-spirited just now, but she will wear well. By Jove, I'm almost in love!" And to the extent of his selfish, material nature, he was.

He made his declaration confidently, but with more of feeling than Jessie thought him capable. For one moment she thought to end a scene which was distasteful, by a positive refusal of his suit. But only for an instant did she hesitate to assume the part upon which she had determined.

"Mr. Morris," she said with an earnestness which almost tricked herself, "I owe a duty to my father which I cannot forego. He is alone and in

trouble, and I cannot leave him. You know little of the pride of the Cardens if you imagine that the daughter of General Marshall Carden will give her hand in marriage so long as the shadow of bankruptcy hangs over his name."

"But, Jessie," interposed Morris eagerly, "that can all be fixed, don't you know. Your father is not really bankrupt, and all that sort of thing. He has assets, stocks and securities which will more than meet all claims against him. That can all be arranged. Don't you worry your pretty head about business affairs but leave them to the men."

"That is what my father says," said Jessie demurely, but with a growing indignation. "Still I know he is in trouble, and I cannot think of marriage until he no longer fears to look any man in the face. I know little of business affairs, but I do know that he is in debt. He is confident that he will be able to meet all of his obligations, and talks gaily of sending me to Paris to complete my studies, but I fear his hopes are unfounded. Aunt Helen has offered to meet my expenses abroad, and it is likely I shall go to Paris in the autumn. Beyond that I do not see my way clear, only—I cannot marry now."

Morris again assured Jessie of his absolute confidence in General Carden's financial future, and attempted to secure some conditional promise from her.

"I am willing to wait, don't you know," he

said. "I'm sure General Carden will come out all right. Go abroad if you like, but promise to marry me when you return." He gazed longingly at her.

"No. I will promise not to marry within the next two years. Will that satisfy you?"

Morris left Jessie's presence wild with delight over his fancied success.

A few days later General Carden arrived from Boston, and held several conferences with Arthur Morris. One night he greeted Jessie with unusual tenderness. The old proud light was in his eyes. His shoulders were thrown back and his step was elastic.

"I am no longer a bankrupt, Jessie, my darling," he said, when they were alone. "I have so disposed of my securities to Mr. Morris that I am able to pay all of my debts and have enough remaining to send you abroad, my pet. And Mr. Morris has given me a position in his bank, with a chance to work into a partnership."

"Oh, that's splendid!" exclaimed Jessie. "Are you sure you will not be disappointed? Is it all arranged beyond any doubt?"

"Here is the check," said General Carden, with some surprise. "Why do you ask, Jessie?"

"Because I wish to go to Paris as soon as possible," was the answer. "I am just crazy to take up my painting and music. And now I can go, can't I, papa?"

"But I thought you intended to spend the summer in Hingham. Mr. Morris goes there next month."

"Aunt Helen, Edith and uncle Tom are going day after to-morrow," said Jessie, after a moment's reflection. "I would like to spend a week or two in Hingham with them, and then sail for Paris from Boston. I will be an old woman before I finish my studies, unless I make haste. Besides, it's lovely in Paris in summer. I can go, can't I, papa?"

"Certainly, my pet."

Arthur Morris called that evening, and vainly attempted to persuade her to spend the summer in Hingham, and postpone her trip abroad until autumn. He seemed much disappointed when Jessie positively refused to modify her plans. Morris felt an added sense of proprietorship in Jessie, but this he had not the tact to conceal.

"I told you that General Carden would come out all right," he said, with a meaning smile. "Our bank was willing to extend the accommodation."

"Papa has told me none of the details, and, if he had, I wouldn't have understood them," said Jessie. "I thought it was a regular business transaction. You don't mean to say that my father—General Carden—is the recipient of a favor—an unfair accommodation at any banker's hands?"

"Not at all; not at all," stammered Morris, lowering his eyes before her searching gaze. "The affair was strictly a business one. I only wish to

point out that everything has turned out just as I predicted. The securities were in such shape that our bank could handle them—and we handled them. That's all."

Morris asked permission to write, and Jessie granted it, but warned him that she was going to Paris to work—not to write letters.

He bade her an effusive farewell, and Jessie gave a happy sigh of relief when the train rolled out from the station.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

TWO STRANGE INTERVIEWS

IT was delightful to be again in the old-fashioned country house overlooking the ocean. Jessie confessed to Edith Hancock that her anxiety to return to Paris was assumed.

"I would be perfectly happy in this dear old place all summer—were it not for one discord," she said to Edith as they galloped along the beach the first evening after their arrival in Hingham. "Yonder is a suggestion of what is driving me to a foreign land."

Jessie pointed with her riding-whip at the red-tiled roof of the Morris mansion, seen several miles away through a cleft in the hills.

"Do you mean that you are flying from Arthur Morris?" Edith's dark eyes opened wide.

"I do. I prefer the society of strangers abroad rather than to tolerate his occasional presence here," answered Jessie, biting her lip in vexation.

"That's a strange way to speak of one's betrothed," observed Edith, with an arch look at her cousin.

"You should not say that, Edith! Do not make me angry by so absurd an insinuation. You know very well you have no cause to say such a thing."

"But Mr. Morris thinks so, cousin dear," persisted Edith. "He as much as told me that you were engaged to him, and asked me to congratulate

him. That impossible Kingsley told me the same thing, and had the impudence to suggest that it was a rare chance for a double wedding. You must have flirted outrageously with Mr. Morris. I really feel sorry for him, Jessie. Most girls would esteem him a splendid catch."

"Please do not tease me, Edith," pleaded Jessie, tears brimming her eyes. "It is bad enough as it is, without making it worse, and then—then twitting me about it—you, dear cousin, the only one in all the world to whom I can tell my troubles. I have not deceived Mr. Morris; if he imagines such a ridiculous thing he has deceived himself. In his overweening conceit he has assumed a prerogative which shall never be his; never, Edith, never, never, never!"

"I'm delighted to hear you say so," declared Edith, with a mischievous laugh. "The only reason I had for teasing you was to make you tell me the truth. You have not said a word to me for weeks about Arthur Morris, but I know you are not a flirt, Jessie."

"I shall never flirt with Mr. Morris," asserted Jessie, a smile chasing away the tears and bringing the dimples to her cheeks. "There's a great difference between a financial campaign and a flirtation. I am a commercial diplomat, Edith. So is Mr. Morris. So is papa—a very unfortunate one, recently. I have been taking part in a triangular engagement, and have secured a temporary advan-

tage. The spoils of my victory have been turned over to papa, who does not know that I have been his ally. The most remarkable thing about the outcome is that Mr. Morris imagines he has won; papa is certain that he has achieved a notable triumph, and I am so satisfied with the result that I'm going abroad for two years to rest on my laurels."

"What under the sun are you talking about?" asked Edith.

"I could never explain it to you," laughed Jessie. "It's all about stocks and bonds, and bulls and bears, and shorts and longs, and margins and equities, and lots of other things which you could not understand without weeks of study. But I've not been flirting, Edith; I've been—what is it they call it—'plunging in Wall Street.'"

"That's worse than flirting, and not half so much fun," declared Edith.

"But I've reformed," said Jessie, gaily. "Let's turn up this road and take the old turnpike back of the house."

They cantered in silence until they came to the old bridge where Jessie first met John Burt. There she reined in her bay.

"We'll let the horses rest here a moment," she said. "I always liked this spot. Isn't the view charming across the level of the marsh to the rocks and the dark fringe of pines beyond?"

"It's much better at the top of the hill," insisted Edith, and wondered what Jessie could find

to admire in the prosaic surroundings. "Come on, Jessie," and she touched her roan with the whip.

Jessie remained behind. Back through the swiftly-flying years her fancy wandered to the summer day when, under the tuition of a sturdy farmer lad, she fished for crabs over the side of the bridge. She noted that an ornamental iron rail had been substituted for the great oaken timbers, and resented the improvement. But the creek was unchanged, and the tide swirled in eddies, which brought back the hour when her cap fell into the water, to be rescued by the dog "Prince," at John Burt's command.

A few rods away the road turned to the old Burt farmhouse, and she could almost imagine that John was again by her side, as in those happy summer days when it was heaven to live—those long, blissful days ere love came to temper joy with sorrow.

Did John Burt yet live? Did she yet hold the place in his heart she occupied on that night, when, under the old maples, she rested against his breast and bade him a sad farewell? Would he return? When? The little brook, flowing towards the ocean on the outgoing tide, seemed the sole connecting link between the past and the future.

The clatter of hoofs aroused Jessie from her reverie. She looked up to see Edith coming towards her.

"What attraction has that muddy old creek?"

demanded Edith. "Come on, Jessie; uncle Tom has sounded the horn for dinner."

On the morrow Edith and Mrs. Bishop went to Boston on a shopping expedition, but they could not persuade Jessie to accompany them. In the afternoon she ordered her horse saddled, and, declining an escort, soon disappeared in a turn of the road. Half an hour later she stopped in front of Peter Burt's farmhouse.

She had not dismounted when the great oaken door swung back and Peter Burt came towards her. There was a kindly gleam in his eye as, with a courtly air, he bowed and greeted her.

"It is thoughtful of you to remember me, my child," he said, as he gave her his hand and helped her to dismount. "Jasper, take care of Miss Carden's horse! We will sit in the shade of the trees; it is cool and pleasant here."

He left her for a moment and returned with chairs. Mrs. Jasper followed with glasses and a pitcher of delicious cold cider.

"It is very refreshing," said Jessie, who had regained her courage. "Are you not lonesome here, Mr. Burt?"

"I am never lonesome so long as I can commune with the Creator of all good things," said Peter Burt. "How is your father, my child?"

"He is very well," answered Jessie. "Since you saw him he has had financial trouble, but his affairs are in better shape now. He lives in New York."

The old man made no reply and an interval of silence followed. She felt that his eyes were upon her, not unkindly, but searching, friendly and magnetic. Almost unconsciously she addressed him:

"Have you received any word or heard anything from John, Mr. Burt?"

She thought afterwards that the question was bold, but it did not seem so at the time.

"You are the only one in the world who has a right to ask me that question, or to whom I would return an answer," he replied. He paused for a moment as if to weigh his words.

"I have heard from him," he said deliberately. "He is alive and well."

"Alive and well!" she exclaimed, her eyes glistening with excitement.

"He is alive and well," repeated Peter Burt. This strange interview took place more than two years before James Blake returned from California, and as has been narrated inadvertently gave to Peter Burt his first verbal information concerning John Burt.

"Listen to me, my child," said Peter Burt, impressively, "and have faith in every word I say to you. Do not feel disappointed when I tell you that I have received no letter from him, and no facts concerning him from any human being. Yet I say to you that I know he is alive and well, and blessed beyond most men with the favors which God bequeaths to those for whom the prayers and interces-

sions of his servants ascend. John is in a far-off land, and there he shall remain until the time ordained for his return. Seek not to call him away from fields not yet harvested. I am four-score and more years old, yet shall I live long after his return, and he and his shall be the joy of my closing days. Youth is impatient, but it is powerless to check God's plans. Do you believe what I have told you, my child?"

"I do," answered Jessie Carden, and her voice and the confident look in her eyes added emphasis to her declaration.

Peter Burt abruptly changed the subject, nor did he return to it. He questioned Jessie about her studies and listened as she told him of her two years spent abroad. To her surprise he was conversant on modern art and literature, and discussed the various conflicting and converging schools with an exact knowledge which astounded her. He threw off his austere manner as a traveler sheds his cloak under the warming rays of the sun. His conversation was not without a quaint wit, and for the time Jessie was oblivious to the void of years which separated them. He spoke with the direct positive enthusiasm which made John Burt so delightful a companion.

For nearly three hours they talked on various topics, and never once did Peter Burt lead the conversation in a direction not entertaining to his fair young visitor. Not until the great rock to the west

of the house threw its long shadow over them did Jessie look at her watch. With an exclamation of surprise she arose to go.

"You have made this afternoon a very happy one for me, my child," he said, as he lifted her to the saddle. He bowed his gray head and raised his powerful arms.

"May God bless and keep you, my daughter."

Jessie rode home in the fading sunlight, a great joy in her heart. "He is alive and well!" she repeated, time and time again. Edith met her as she entered the gateway, and noted the rapt look on her face, but little did she divine the reason.

A week later Jessie sailed for France. It was nearly two years before she completed her studies, and again entered Boston harbor. Several weeks before her return to New York, Arthur Morris had acquainted James Blake with the "secret of his engagement," as has been related.

Thus after many years, the several figures in this strange drama had been drawn, as by magnets, within the confines of the great metropolis, whose ever-moving shuttles weave so many mysteries.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

GENERAL CARDEN IS PUZZLED

"HERE are the papers, papa dear. And here are cigars and matches. I found your glasses on the writing-desk. You are careless as ever, papa dear. Isn't it nice to have some one who knows just what you wish and where to find it?"

"It is, Jessie, my pet!" And General Carden placed his arm around his daughter's waist, drew her fair face down to his and kissed her fondly.

"I shall not let you read all the evening, papa, because I have so many things to tell you," said Jessie, smoothing back the scant gray locks. "Now I will agree to be quiet as a mouse for an hour and let you read, and then you must talk to me—or rather, let me talk to you." And Jessie Carden opened a book and drew a chair near her father's side.

"Let me look over the market reports and read the editorial on the President's special message," said General Carden, and a moment later he was deep in the statistical mysteries known only to those whose fortunes are centered in Wall Street.

They were in the cozy drawing-room of Mr. Bishop's New York residence. Thomas Bishop was born in New York City, and spent his early manhood in that metropolis. His father willed to him the old farm near Hingham, and when he won the hand of Helen Carden—the only sister to Mar-

shall Carden—he took his bride to the old country mansion and passed the honeymoon beneath its broad gables and amid the typical New England surroundings. He held fast to his New York real estate, and managed his farm with a skill not surpassed by his neighbors. As a consequence he waxed rich not only in Massachusetts but in New York.

Obeying an instinct which has all the effect of a natural law, Thomas Bishop had drifted back to his birthplace, retaining the old Hingham mansion as a summer residence. The age of sixty found him hale and hearty, the owner of a brownstone residence in Madison Avenue, New York City, and delighted to share its comforts with Marshall Carden and his daughter. In deference to the general's pride the Bishop's accepted a nominal stipend for the accommodations furnished. No wreck cast against the rocks of speculation ever stranded on a shore more pleasant or in waters more quiet.

"It is remarkable how easily a new concern can establish itself in Wall Street," said General Carden, laying aside his paper and slowly wiping his glasses. Jessie raised her eyes with dutiful interest. "It was not so in the old conservative days. It then took years to establish standing and credit. Now an unknown man can come out from the West and have the Street by the ears in thirty days. For example, take this man Blake, who has established the firm of Blake & Company. He suddenly appeared here

from San Francisco and conducted a campaign which swept two old established houses off their feet. His profits were estimated at millions. Since then we have heard of nothing but the doings of James Blake. You cannot pick up a paper without being compelled to read of what James Blake has done, what James Blake is about to do, what James Blake's opinion is on this question or on the other. Here is an article." continued General Carden, picking up a paper, "which gives an account of a conference between this upstart and the Secretary of the Treasury of the United States. They say Blake is only twenty-seven years old. Jessie, my dear, it is a great thing to be born fortunate. You were not wise, darling, in your selection of a father." General Carden smiled sadly.

"I've the best and dearest father in the world!" exclaimed Jessie, placing her hand in his. "But I'm not going to let him read the papers any more this evening. Let's forget all about the old stocks and the wonderful Mr. Blake, and talk of those we know. Papa, dear, I wish to ask you a question."

"What is it, my pet? They say that children must not ask questions."

She hesitated a moment, the color mounting to her cheeks. She had returned from Europe the day before and this was her first evening with her father.

"Has anything been heard of John Burt? I—I thought perhaps Mr. Morris would know as soon as any one."

General Carden's lips tightened. He pulled nervously at his beard, and the military moustache bristled aggressively.

"Answer me, papa! I have a right to know this."

There was a flash in the tender eyes and a warning curve in the pretty lips. The crimson left her cheek and she looked frankly into her father's face. There is in innocence the bravery of truth and the calm modesty of virtue. General Carden was disarmed.

"Nothing has been heard from Mr. Burt so far as I can learn, Jessie," he said. "Possibly his grandfather may have news. I am reasonably sure Mr. Morris has none. Let us talk of something else, Jessie."

The door opened and Mrs. Bishop entered.

"Here is your evening mail, Marshall," she said, handing her brother a number of letters. "And here is a letter for you, Jessie."

Jessie opened and read a note from Arthur Morris. It congratulated her on a safe return from abroad, and closed by asking permission to call on the first evening which would suit her convenience. The letter lay idly in her hand, and her thoughts were far away when the General uttered an exclamation.

"A most astounding coincidence! Really, this is quite remarkable!"

"What has happened, papa?"

"You remember that I was speaking of the striking success of a western man, named Blake? Well, here is a letter from him! This is what he writes." And General Carden read, with evident pride, the following letter:

JAMES BLAKE & COMPANY
WALL STREET

New York, June 2.

Dear Sir:—

I am informed that you hold an equity in ten thousand shares of the L. & O. Railroad Company. I have customers who are interested in this property, and represent them in negotiations now pending. It is possible your interests may be conserved by conferring with me on this matter. I shall be pleased to meet you at your earliest convenience. To a gentleman of your experience an injunction to secrecy is unnecessary.

Awaiting the pleasure of a conference in my office, and trusting that it may result to our mutual advantage, I remain,

Very truly, yours,
JAMES BLAKE,
President, James Blake & Company.

To General Marshall Carden,
No. — Madison avenue,
New York City.

"That is odd, isn't it?" said Jessie. The general's face glowed with pleasure. "Do you own ten thousand shares of stock in a railroad, papa?"

"I own an equity in that amount of stock in an alleged railroad," he said, with a grim smile. "They didn't teach you about 'equities' when you was abroad, did they, little girl? An equity is something you think you own, and hope you will realize on, but do not expect to. It is generally the possible salvage from a mortgage. Do not bother your head about it, pet. From whom is your letter?"

"From Mr. Morris. He wishes to call some evening this week."

"Ah, um—m." The general cleared his throat and appeared to be concerned only indirectly. "Let's see; this is Friday; Edith is coming tomorrow. Suppose you invite Mr. Morris to take dinner with us Wednesday evening. Edith will be here and we will have a little party of four for a rubber of whist. Is that agreeable to you, pet?"

"If it suits you, papa," was the quiet response.

"I have nothing to say about it, Jessie."

"I have no engagement for Wednesday evening," said Jessie, carelessly. "I will write and ask him to call at that time."

"I have not told you of the change in Mr. Morris's affairs," said General Carden, with some eagerness, "nor have I mentioned my good fortune in consequence of that change. Randolph Morris has retired, and transferred the bulk of his vast

property to Arthur, who has greatly changed in the last eighteen months. The responsibilities of his new position have obliterated that fickleness which was his youthful fault. Arthur Morris is one of our future generals of finance. He is a recognized power in Wall Street, and a factor in local politics and enterprises." He paused, and regarded his daughter intently.

"And your good fortune is what, papa?" asked Jessie, without lifting her eyes.

"A much more important position has been awarded to me, with a corresponding increase in emolument," replied General Carden with more of dignity than of pride. Jessie well knew that no salary or position in the gift of Arthur Morris could compensate the lost freedom of an independent fortune. She threw her arms around her father's neck and spoke tender words of congratulation.

"We will talk no more of money and other gloomy things," she declared with a laugh which brought the roses to her cheeks. "I am going to play for you."

"Listen to this, papa!" She ran her fingers over the keys of the piano. The liquid notes swelled into the intoxicating melody of a gypsy dance and quivered with the trilling of birds among the trees. Then followed the pulsing rhythm of a martial march which fired the blood of the old soldier and kindled the war light in his eyes. For

half an hour Jessie played. Then she began a spirited recital of her experiences abroad. She mimicked the staid old German professors and imitated the mincing French dancing-masters, and the general laughed until the tears coursed down his cheeks.

General Carden made an early appointment with James Blake, and was promptly admitted to the private office of the famous operator.

"If you have no objection, general," said James Blake, after the usual commonplace remarks which preface business transactions, "explain the exact status of this block of L. & O. stock."

"There is no secret about it," replied the former banker. "A number of years ago I became convinced that the L. & O. railroad had a brilliant future. In my opinion it occupied a strategic position. I purchased fifteen thousand shares on speculation. After a small rise the stock began to decline and I sold five thousand shares at a slight loss. Then the panic swept the country. Not dreaming that my bank would be involved, I decided to protect my L. & O. stock and accordingly bought it in at fifty, paying the sum of $500,000 in cash. Then the crash came and my bank went under with others. Randolph Morris was my principal creditor. To meet his claims I sacrificed my Boston residence and all of my personal property. In the meantime L. & O. had severely declined. After several conferences, Mr. Arthur Morris consented, as a per-

sonal favor, to lend me two hundred thousand dollars on the stock. It was therefore hypothecated to him for this amount. This was about two years ago. Interest and other charges have since accumulated until Mr. Morris has now a claim of $248,000 against the stock. It was quoted to-day at 27. At this figure, assuming that so large a block could be liquidated, my equity amounts to less than $22,000. The money advanced by Mr. Morris was sufficient to meet all claims against me, and I was honorably discharged from bankruptcy." General Carden drew himself up proudly.

"At what price does Mr. Morris propose to sacrifice the stock?" asked Blake.

"At twenty-six. He has a purchaser who will take it at that figure, though I have an option on it at the same price under our contract. I have no such sum of money, nor one-tenth of it. I have long since abandoned hope of realizing anything from my original investment of half a million."

James Blake made a rapid calculation on a writing pad.

"I have a proposition to make you, General Carden," he said. "I will advance you the money to exercise your option, on the condition that you do so when it drops to 26. You will deposit the stock with me and place it in a pool to be handled at my discretion. As an evidence of my good faith I now offer you 35 for your stock—eight points more than the market price. After meeting the

Morris claim this will leave you a balance of $100,000. I advise you to reject this latter offer, General Carden, and to accept my first proposition to take up the stock when it drops to 26, pool it with me and rely on my judgment that it will rise to a point which will net you more substantial profits."

General Carden looked into the handsome face of the young man who calmly made this proposition. Of his sincerity he had no doubt, but the temptation to grasp the competence dangling before his eyes was almost irresistible. The weight of years and the blows struck by untoward fortune had weakened his spirit and all but shattered his confidence. For some moments he was silent, but the old hopes awoke and the courage of youth came back.

"I will follow your advice, Mr. Blake," he said, firmly. "My one ambition is to insure the happiness of my daughter. Perhaps I have no right to again risk money now within my reach, which rightfully belongs to her, but I will make one more attempt to regain a hard-earned fortune. I shall not ask you to explain your remarkable offer, in which you practically tender to me a gift of one hundred thousand dollars. We are strangers, and I certainly have no claim on your liberality. You must be sure of your ground, and I am content to rely on your judgment. I therefore accept your original offer, Mr. Blake, and will sign an agreement to that effect."

Blake called a legal subordinate and, in General Carden's presence, dictated the terms of the contract, duplicate copies of which were signed and witnessed. A clerk entered with a slip of paper. Blake glanced at it and passed it to General Carden.

"Here is a certified check on our bank for $250,000," he said. "When L. & O. drops to 26, cash the check, make a settlement with Mr. Morris, and deposit the stock with me. I take this precaution so that there may be no chance for delay, and a cash transaction will acquaint no one with the principals. Do not have the slightest anxiety as to the future movement of the stock."

General Carden examined the check, folded it and carefully placed it in his wallet.

"I should be pleased and honored," said General Carden, as he arose to go, "to have you accept the humble hospitality of my temporary home. For obvious reasons," he continued, smiling, "it would be impolitic for us to dine in public places while this financial matter is in progress, but within the seclusion of my rooms I should like to testify, in a social way, my appreciation of your generosity."

"I accept with pleasure," replied Blake. "I have lived so many years in hotels and clubs that such an invitation promises a genuine treat."

"If you have no other engagement, dine with us on Thursday evening."

"I have none, and shall do myself that pleasure. Until then, adieu, General Carden. Again,

let me caution you not to disturb yourself over the movements of L. &. O. Good afternoon, sir?"

James Blake shook hands with the general, and turned and entered John Burt's private office.

"It's all right, John!" he exclaimed, with the enthusiasm of a boy. "You couldn't have managed it better yourself. Carden hesitated for a moment, and then refused a bonus of a hundred thousand, just as you said he would. I made a straight out business deal with him, and he need never know that you had a thing to do with it. I have his option and a contract which gives us absolute control. He's a dignified and at times a crusty old gentleman, but he stood in proper awe of the famous firm of James Blake & Company."

Blake laughed and then his face grew thoughtful.

"I wonder, John," he said, "what he would have thought had he known that a proper title for the firm would be 'John Burt & John Burt?' What would he have done had he known that you were not fifty feet away when, as your proxy, I made that generous offer?"

"Did General Carden say anything about his daughter?" asked John, with anxious eagerness. "Has she returned from Europe?"

"I think the fair Jessie is in New York at this very moment," said Blake, smiling as he noted the flash of joy in the other's eyes. "I did not have a good chance to put the question squarely to him. I'm not supposed to know that he has a daughter,

and you cautioned me to be very careful to say nothing which might arouse his suspicions. But he invited me to dine with him at the Bishop residence on Thursday evening. Isn't that great luck? He said to me: 'If you have no other engagement dine with *us* on Thursday evening.' He would hardly invite me to dine with the Bishops without saying something about it, and that little word '*us*' means the charming Jessie. Don't you think so, John?"

"I hope so. Of course you accepted, Jim?"

"I should say I did," laughed Blake. "If General Carden hadn't been so excited over my glittering offer to make him rich, he might have noticed the prompt energy with which I said I would come. How would you like to take my place, John?"

"Very much, Jim." There was a wistful, far-away expression in the deep gray eyes. "I must wait a time yet—not long, I hope."

"Never mind, old man," said Blake, heartily, "I hope you may live to dine with her a million times, and that in future years an old chap named Blake may occasionally be permitted to have a seat at the table, and that he may be surrounded by a new and increasing generation of sturdy young John Burts and fair and radiant little Jessie Burts."

"Thank you, Jim," returned John Burt, his expressive face aglow with pleasure. "When that happy day comes you must bring Mrs. Blake and the children with you."

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

BREAKING OLD TIES

ON the Thursday afternoon following his interview with General Carden, Blake strolled into his favorite club. Handsome, dashing and popular, deemed the possessor of millions, with a prestige such as seldom comes to men of his years, the doors of exclusive clubs opened to him—influential members finding ways to circumvent the exactions of waiting lists. Scores of new friends and admirers were scattered through the rooms. He was chatting with Kingsley when Arthur Morris arrived, and at the first opportunity led Blake to a secluded corner.

"Pardon me, old chap, I don't often talk business after hours," apologized Morris; "beastly bad form and all that sort of thing, don't you know, and you will excuse me for mentioning a little stock matter, won't you?"

"Certainly, Morris. What's up?"

Morris looked cautiously around and dropped his voice to a whisper.

"Once in a while I get hold of a good thing, and I've got one now," he began. "We can help each other out now and then by exchanging tips, don't you know! There's going to be a boom in L. & O.!"

"Yes? What makes you think so, Morris?"

"Caw'nt go into explanations, old chap, but you buy a little L. & O. When it drops below 26

it will take a jump of eight or ten points. That's straight! The road's in great shape! Good business, good crops, and—and a coming meeting of the stockholders. Something's going to happen! They're going to cut a melon. You're safe to buy five or ten thousand shares. Take my word for it, old chap!"

"Much obliged to you, Morris." Blake took out his memorandum book and carefully made a note of the proffered advice. "Nothing moves so fast as the stock of one of these little roads, once it gets started. I imagine you've got control of the stock. You needn't tell me, old man—I'll do my own guessing. We Yankees are great on guessing."

Morris looked at him shrewdly, chuckled, slapped him on the back, and arm in arm they sauntered down the room.

"Don't buy until it drops below 26," he warned Blake as they parted.

"All right; I'll watch it. Thousand times obliged to you."

Blake ordered his coachman to drive to the Bishop residence. He lay back on the cushioned seat and laughed softly.

"Wall Street is the only place in the world where a truthful man can get a deserved reputation as a liar," he soliloquized. "Morris would save many a dollar by following his own advice. What a scoundrel he is! To think that such a hound is engaged

to Jessie Carden! I fear Miss Carden is too fond of money. Well, money's a good thing, but if I were a woman I wouldn't marry Morris if he had a billion. And John's got enough to buy and sell him."

The carriage drew up at the Bishop residence. General Carden greeted Blake in the drawing-room. It was restful to contemplate this abode, to breathe the air of domestic luxury, and to contrast it with the frigid elegance of the bachelor apartments where his recent years had been spent. While chatting with his host, Blake found himself wondering if a day would come when the magic of a woman's hand and the inspiration of a woman's love would create for him a place worthy the name of home.

In an opposite corner of the room he noticed a portrait of Marshall Carden in the uniform of a United States general. When it was drawn, the beard and moustache had not been touched by the gray of years. Blake's eyes wandered along the walls until they rested on another portrait—that of Jessie Carden. At first he would have sworn it was the canvas he had seen in the apartments of Arthur Morris, but the one before him was mounted in a heavy gold leaf frame, while its duplicate was surrounded by an oaken border ornamented with silver filigree. He paused in the middle of a sentence, his eyes riveted on the canvas, and his mind dazed at the thought that this portrait had confronted him three times—first in John Burt's study room, then

With old school dignity General Carden presented James Blake.

in Arthur Morris's library, and now the same profile, pose and figure adorned the walls of the Bishop residence.

"A portrait of my daughter Jessie—one of Steinbach's best productions," exclaimed General Carden, with fatherly pride, mistaking Blake's amazement for polite admiration. "She returned from abroad only a few days ago. You can get a better light from this point," he continued, rising and conducting his guest to a spot where the work of the artist showed to advantage.

"It was painted nearly three years ago," added General Carden. "Ah, here she comes now!"

As he spoke Blake heard the faint rustle of silk and the music of laughing voices. The portiéres parted, and Mrs. Bishop entered with Jessie and her cousin, Edith Hancock. With old-school dignity, General Carden presented James Blake.

The portrait was a libel. The genius of the artist had failed to transfer to canvas the radiant beauty of the living, breathing Jessie Carden who stood before him.

There is born in every man's brain the image of an ideal woman;—the fair goddess to whom his imagination pays devotions; the vision of a face and form floating beyond the reach of extended arms; the elusive phantom of the soul's desire—ever present yet ever distant—the *ignis fatuus* of fancy hovering above the swamps of realism. James Blake's ideal was dethroned the moment he looked

into Jessie Carden's eyes and felt the mysterious thrill of her presence.

To her cordial greeting he stammered a reply, and felt relieved when General Carden engaged him in conversation on a topic of political interest. Mrs. Bishop pleaded a theatre engagement and excused herself.

After a delightful hour spent over dinner, during which Blake was in lively humor, the young ladies left the general and his guest to the enjoyment of cigars. For the first time in his life Blake would willingly have sacrificed the soothing delights of the weed. General Carden discussed the latest gossip of the stock market, Blake responding absent-mindedly in monosyllables. He was glad when his host gave the signal and conducted him to the drawing-room, where they found Jessie and Edith awaiting them.

Edith Hancock was a charming girl, but James Blake was so enthralled by the rarer beauty of Jessie Carden that he denied the other a fair tribute of admiration. The family resemblance was so marked in face, figure and carriage that neither brush nor pen could limn the peculiar charm which distinguished Jessie's beauty above that of Edith.

In fact, the accurate critic might have contended for the latter. He would have pointed out that Jessie's nose was slightly retrousse—a departure from the exact canons of feminine beauty, which could not be charged against Edith Han-

cock. There were exquisite modulations in the ovals of their faces and in the archings of their eyebrows; curves delicate in their difference, yet potent in creating that ensemble which makes for the superlative in loveliness. Edith's hair was a shade lighter than the dark brown tresses of Jessie Carden, but her eyes were of the same shade.

It is not possible to explain why one of two diamonds scintillates with greater brilliancy, therefore words are incapable of disclosing the secret of the charm which lurks in the eyes of a supremely beautiful woman. It is not found only in the physical beauty of the eyes, but in the mirrored image of that individuality which, for lack of a better term, we call the soul.

James Blake did not attempt an analysis of the beauty of the cousins. All his life he had followed the devious current of his emotions, and been buffeted by the conflicting winds of his impressions. Yet those who knew and admired these fair young women could not quarrel with his verdict, nor state it in terser language when he inwardly said:

"Edith is beautiful; Jessie is beauty."

At the general's request Jessie played several of his favorite selections, Edith standing by her side and deftly turning the music pages for her. They then sang a duet: a German folk song. Jessie's voice was a pure contralto—tender, rich and wonderfully expressive in its timbre. Blake was passionately fond of music, and, though he had

been given little opportunity to cultivate his decided natural talents, was nevertheless an excellent singer and a capable critic.

"That was grand!" he exclaimed, his handsome face aglow with admiration and the inspiration of the music. "I have never heard *Wanderer's Nachtleid* rendered more exquisitely. Please favor me with *Der Tannenbaum*, will you?"

"Willingly," said Jessie, as Edith smiled her assent. "But *Der Tannenbaum* is much more effective with a tenor part. You sing, do you not, Mr. Blake? Something tells me you do."

"I'm sure Mr. Blake sings," asserted Edith. "Come, Mr. Blake, the general shall be our audience!"

"I have been charged with singing, but never by such fair accusers," laughed Blake, stepping forward. "I trust the general will not mete out a punishment to fit the crime. Sing the English translation and I will do my best to carry a part."

Blake acquitted himself famously. In San Francisco clubs and social circles his clear, strong voice had added to his popularity, but never did he sing so well as on that night standing by Jessie Carden's side. During the interludes he experienced a keen pleasure in watching her tapered fingers trip over the keys. Never did he forget his delight, when, after the first measure Jessie looked up over her shoulder, and paid him the compliment of a smiling glance—a look of surprise and appreciation. His

thoughts, at that moment, were far removed from John Burt.

General Carden applauded vigorously and demanded an encore. The trio sang several songs, and the old soldier lay back in his arm-chair and let his mind drift back to the hours when the one of whom Jessie was the image lifted her sweet voice in the ballads he loved to hear. At his request they sang "Douglas, Tender and True," "Robin Adair," "The Blue Bells of Scotland," "Annie Laurie," and several old war songs.

Then Jessie proposed a rubber of whist, and in the cut she became the partner of James Blake. Jessie played well and they defeated the general and Edith.

No matter how pretty a woman may be, she imperils her reign by displaying dulness or lack of interest over a card game. Most men play cards to win—be the stakes money or the mere flush of success—and though they may smile at the woman whose blundering dashes down their hopes, they do it with an ill grace. And Jessie played to win from the first lead until the last trick was gathered in.

"You don't know what a victory we have won!" declared Jessie, her eyes sparkling with pleasure. "Papa and Edith think themselves invincible, and this is their first defeat. Don't look so disconsolate, papa, we beat you fairly and squarely. Let's go to the conservatory. I want to show Mr. Blake those lovely bulbs I sent you from Holland, and I

know both of you men are famishing for a cigar," and leaving Edith and the general to follow she escorted Blake to the great glass house, with its arched roof and wilderness of palms, ferns and flowers.

"I know this is not much of a treat to you," ventured Jessie. "I had forgotten that you have spent all of your life in California, where the loveliest flowers in the world grow wild. It must be beautiful there!"

"But I have not spent all of my life in California," Blake said, glad of the opportunity to bring up a certain topic.

They had inspected the tulips, in which Jessie took so much pride, and were seated near a fountain, beneath the drooping branches of a Brazilian palm. The general and Edith were on the opposite side of the fountain, half obscured by its spray, which seemed to blend with the smoke from the old gentleman's cigar. He was listening to Edith, but only when she laughed was her voice audible above the splash of the waters.

The night was clear and warm and the stars twinkled oddly through the glass dome. The air was fragrant with the breath of flowers. Blake's cigar was of choicest Havana. The fairest woman he had ever met was looking into his face. He wondered if he had been translated into Paradise.

"I lived in California only seven or eight years," continued Blake, "and had little chance to

study flowers. For nearly five years I was in the mountains, where an occasional violet was about all I saw. What little knowledge I have of flowers dates back to my boyhood days in New England."

"New England? I understood papa to say you belonged to that haughty clan known as 'The Native Sons of California.' What part of New England, Mr. Blake?"

"Massachusetts," he answered proudly. "I was born in Boston, less than half a mile from where the tea was thrown overboard. My mother's name was Smith, so I'm a Yankee all over."

"So am I," laughed Jessie. "John Hancock once lived in the house where I was born, and Samuel Adams was there many, many times. I'm as much of a Hancock as Edith, though she won't admit it. Papa is jealous because he does not trace back to any famous Americans, and says that Hancock was not much of a banker, any way. He claims that such men as Mr. Drexel, or Mr. Peabody, do more business in a week than Mr. Hancock did in all his career. To tease me he talks awfully about our great Boston patriots. He claims that Samuel Adams was the only man who ever failed in the brewing business. I answer him that it would be a grand thing to-day if more brewers failed and more patriots succeeded. Don't you like Boston better than San Francisco, Mr. Blake?"

"Really, I remember very little of Boston," replied Blake. "When I was a small boy we moved

to Quincy, and from there to a farm near Hingham. That part of my New England life most vivid in my memory clusters round the old farm in Rocky Woods—as the people who lived there used to call it—and may yet, for all I know."

"Did you live in Rocky Woods?" The dark eyes opened wide and Jessie looked wonderingly into Blake's face.

"Why, yes, I lived there for several years. Do you mean to tell me that you ever heard of that desolate patch of rocks, pines, stone fences, huckleberry swamps and cranberry marshes?"

"Certainly I have. Uncle Tom—Mr. Bishop—lived there for a generation, and spends the summers there now. I have often been there. You must know where the Bishop house stands?"

"Of course I do! Well, I declare, is this the Thomas Bishop who was the only wealthy farmer near Rocky Woods? I've driven past the house thousands of times. It was my boyish idea of a magnificent mansion. My folks were very poor in those days, Miss Carden, and it's not likely your uncle remembers the Blakes, though now that I recall it my father worked for Mr. Bishop two seasons during haying and harvesting. And I helped him. I was a lad of thirteen or fourteen then. You remember the big meadow at the foot of what they called Pine Ledge?"

"Yes."

"I helped rake the hay into windrows and pile

it into cocks in that meadow. Once when it threatened to rain your uncle came out and helped us. I killed a big blacksnake right near the spring, under the old willow tree. One day, when it did rain, I ran to the house, and the hired girl asked me into the kitchen and gave me some doughnuts and a glass of milk."

"Was her name Susie?" asked Jessie with interest.

"That was her name!" exclaimed Blake. "She was a big, goodnatured woman, who always had her sleeves rolled up to her elbows. She had a worthless husband, who lived in Weymouth, and who used to come to the farm and wheedle her out of her hard-earned money. Mr. Bishop chased him away once with a pitchfork."

"That was before I went there," said Jessie. "Susie's husband died when I was twelve years old. She used to show me his picture, and cry and tell me what a good man he was. Isn't it strange, Mr. Blake, that both of us are familiar with that out-of-the-way country? Where was your father's farm?"

"It was then known as the old Leonard farm. Do you know where Peter Burt lived—Peter Burt, the old crazy man who used to pray at night from the top of the big rock?"

"Yes," said Jessie softly, with a little catch at her breath as the blood mounted to her cheeks.

James Blake watched her face intently. Both were thinking of John Burt, but with what different

emotions! Since the sun had set, a gulf had opened between John Burt and James Blake. How wide it was and how deep it was Blake could not tell, but he was conscious of a void which had come as in a dream.

And Jessie Carden? Intuitively she felt that James Blake knew John Burt. In a flash it occurred to her that Blake's business with her father was a subterfuge. Was he the bearer of tidings from John Burt? Perhaps John was dead? If alive, why did he not come himself? She waited breathlessly for Blake to continue.

"If you follow the road which passes Peter Burt's to the east, and turn to the right at the first crossing, you will come to the farmhouse where we lived," explained Blake. "It is about three-quarters of a mile northeast of Peter Burt's."

"I know exactly where it is!" Jessie's eyes glowed with excitement. "And you knew John Burt! I remember now that he often spoke of you. He always called you 'Jim,' and rarely mentioned your last name. It was always 'Here's where Jim and I did this thing,' or 'One time Jim shot three squirrels out of this tree.' You two were always together when you were boys. He told me of the first time you met, and the ridiculous fight you had on a log when you both fell in the creek. And you ran away from home. Did you ever meet John Burt in California, Mr. Blake?"

James Blake was not deceived by the careless

tone in which she asked this question. He possessed the cruel advantage of a gambler who knows the hand of his opponent. With grim joy he reflected that John's injunction for secrecy was still in force. He must either mislead Jessie Carden or prove false to his friend; but for the first time the deceit was his own and not a sacrifice for another.

"Of course I knew John Burt," said Blake reflectively. "Dear old John; I owe him thirty-five dollars. When I ran away from home he gave me every dollar he had, and I've not seen him since. Did you say he had gone to California? Is that so? No, I never saw him there, but that's not strange when one stops to think that the Golden State is eight hundred miles long and two hundred and fifty miles wide. I am going back to Hingham as soon as I get time, and was intending to look John up. And you knew him? That, of course, was after I left for the West. Really, Miss Carden, I almost feel as if we were old acquaintances. Ah, here comes Mr. and Mrs. Bishop! I had no idea it was so late."

Mr. Thomas Bishop was introduced, and after a brief conversation, in which Jessie acquainted her uncle with the fact that their guest was formerly from Rocky Woods, Blake excused himself. He accepted an invitation to call again.

"Then we will continue our recollections of Rocky Woods, Miss Carden," he said on leaving.

"It seems good to meet some one who has lived in the old place, though I confess I do not look back with pleasure to the years I spent there. I may go to Hingham next week. I don't know when I've spent so enjoyable an evening. Good-night."

Instructing his coachman to drive to his apartments, James Blake closed his eyes and attempted to calmly review what had happened. He found it impossible. One emotion held mastery of him—he was in love, madly and defiantly in love with Jessie Carden. He thought of Arthur Morris and hated him. He thought of John Burt and pitied him. Neither should stand in his way.

Could she be engaged to Arthur Morris? Now that he had met Jessie Carden he found himself unconsciously repeating John Burt's indignant declaration: "It is a lie; an infamous lie!" If an engagement did exist, it should be as a barrier of mist to his ardent progress. But she did not, she could not love Arthur Morris.

Did John Burt love her? Did she love John Burt?

These were the stinging, burning questions which seared his brain, but the clamor of his conscience was drowned in the louder din of his passion. He had not yet reached a point where, with calm selfishness he could voice the brutal aphorism of moral and physical desperados: "All is fair in love and war." He was eager to clear himself of self-accused disloyalty to John Burt, and he clutched

at any defence which would serve as possible justification or extenuation.

John Burt was his friend, the founder of his fortunes; the loyal, trustful comrade to whom he owed all he was or could hope to be. Blake knew this, and yet, with the truth confronting him and pleading for justice, the sophistic arguments and evasions of a vaulting passion came readily to his lips.

"How do I know John loves her?" he pleaded. "He has not told me so. He has sent her no word. He could have done so easy enough. She does not know if he be dead or alive. Is that the way for a lover to act? If John is in love, he is very deliberate about it. I would crawl on my knees from California for a glimpse of her face. If she's engaged to Morris she is lost to John, anyway. Even admitting that John does love her, is not my love a thousand times greater than his? She was not greatly excited when his name was mentioned to-night. Perhaps she only likes him. John is a royal fellow with men, but I doubt his popularity with the fair sex. He is too matter of fact. You don't get quotations on love over a stock ticker. John plans a love campaign as calmly as if studying a bank statement. Women don't like such treatment. Jessie probably resents it. If John has lost her it is his own fault. Perhaps he gave her up long ago. Honestly, I believe his hate for Morris is more to him than his affection for Jessie Carden."

Thus quibbled James Blake. Awakened love loosens a million eloquent tongues to plead for self, and palsies the voice which should speak for others. The love of a man for a woman is the sublimation of his egoism; his unconscious exaltation of desire.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

UNREASONING PASSION

FORTUNE had been lavish to John Burt since he fled by night from the shores of New England. He entered on his New York career, possessed of rare gifts. He had a superb physique, youth, health, wealth, knowledge, experience and intuition—the seven-pointed star of Success and Power.

He looked from his office window at the swarming throngs on Wall and Nassau streets. Within a stone's throw were the master spirits of the money world; men whose names were mountains of financial strength, whose smallest deeds were recorded for the delectation of an eager public. And John Burt smiled to think that he was one of them—a leader but unknown. He had all the substance of fame—none of its acclaim.

In all the vast world only two persons knew that such a man as John Burt lived—James Blake and Peter Burt.

John Burt owned stock in thousands of miles of railroads. He was an investor in other great enterprises and activities. An army of men worked under his direction, and the stock market rose and fell at the pressure of his unseen hand. For years he had rebelled at the fate which had made him a recluse, which denied him the fellowship and confidence of his peers. He felt a keen joy over the knowledge that the day was approaching when he

could assume his true place in the world of vast affairs.

But of earth's countless millions there was one above all others to whom he wished to tell his secret. He impatiently awaited the time when he could look into Jessie Carden's face and read the verdict in her eyes. With eagerness he longed for the hour when Blake should report the result of the evening spent with General Carden. For the first time in his life he felt unfit for the exacting duties of the day. Were years of patient waiting and working to be rewarded or unrequited?

Blake arrived in his office at an unusually early hour on the morning following his introduction to Jessie Carden. He had spent a miserable night, racked by passions and torn by emotions which strove for mastery of heart and brain. No sleep came to his bloodshot eyes, and for hours he restlessly paced the floor.

"I love her; my God, how I love her, but I also love John!" he exclaimed again and again, as the night hours crawled slowly away. "What shall I do; what can I do? I cannot give her up. By God, I'll not give her up for any man; not even for John Burt! Dear old John! What a dog I am! What a damned hound I am to turn and bite the hand which feeds me! But I love her! Am I to blame for loving her? How can I help it? A man cannot love a friend as he loves a woman. Would John surrender the woman he loved for me? What am I

to do? I must decide before I see him. If I tell John she is in New York he will see her inside of twenty-four hours. That will be the end of my hopes. Does she love him? She liked him when she was rich and when he didn't have a dollar? Will she not love him now when he is twenty times a millionaire and when she is penniless? Of course she will. But she would learn to love me were it not for John. She shall love me! She must love me! I cannot live without her! Oh, why did I ever see her!"

In this unequal contest between loyalty and passion in a weak and self-indulgent nature, passion won the battle, but at a frightful sacrifice. His conscience cried out against the decision, and no sophistic pleading could still its persistent voice. His judgment warned him that he was doomed to defeat, but with the frenzied desperation of a gambler he staked everything—honor, friendship, loyalty, his business career—all on the turn of a card, and dared to meet John Burt with treachery in his heart and a lie on his lips.

Such was the transformation wrought in the heart of a naturally good man by the influence of an innocent woman. Moralists warn the world against the designing woman; dramatists conjure tragic situations from the wiles and smiles of fair sirens; the pulpit thunders anathemas against those who should wear the scarlet letter, but a calm study of history and a survey of to-day shows that virtue in-

spires greater tragedies than vice. Vice is sometimes alluring; virtue is ever entrancing. A man may dare something for a bad woman; he will risk all for a good woman.

Surely it was not Jessie Carden's fault that her youth, beauty and innocence aroused in James Blake a wild and unreasoning love. Fate had located four human beings for a short space of time in an obscure part of Massachusetts. Chance had decreed that James Blake should be a boyhood friend of John Burt; that Jessie Carden should visit the house of their neighbor; that Arthur Morris should come to know two of them through a whim of his banker father. And then fate scattered these human atoms to the four corners of the earth, only to pick them up and place them in New York City.

One of the three men was strong and patient, one was weak and passionate, one was cunning and unscrupulous, and each, with all the strength of his being, fixed his heart on this one woman.

Blake knew that John Burt was in his private office, but for the first time in his life he hesitated to enter it. Prosperity had erected no wall of formality between these two. From the day they fought their boyish battle, on the edge of the fishing pool, they had called each other "John" and "Jim." In tacitly accepting John Burt's leadership, Blake recognized in his companion those traits which attract allegiance, and which hold it by unseen but powerful bands. By a display of tact which

amounted to genius, John Burt had aided James Blake without patronizing him, and had forgiven his repeated mistakes without offending him.

Blake strolled slowly through the connecting offices and entered the large room reserved for customers. Though it lacked more than an hour before the first quotation would come over the ticker, a score or more of men were scattered about the room. Those who knew the famous operator bowed respectfully. Blake gazed absent-mindedly at a bulletin board containing the early London and Paris quotations. He read them, but they had no meaning. He looked out of the window. The hands of the clock on old Trinity pointed to the hour of nine, and as he watched the bell rumbled the strokes. He was thoroughly, abjectly miserable.

"Who is that gentleman?" asked a smooth-cheeked and dapper young man, who had embarked on his first speculative venture by risking the major part of his quarterly allowance.

"Why, don't you know?" exclaimed his companion. "I should have introduced you. That's James Blake—the famous and only James Blake. I know him well," proudly. "Took dinner with him at the club Saturday evening. You shall meet him, Lawrence. Charming fellow, and the greatest operator this country has ever produced. If you had his millions, my boy, you could buy Erie in ten thousand share lots."

"Dashing looking chap, isn't he?" observed

the novitiate. "By Jove, he's handsome! Looks a bit fagged out, though. Been up most of the night, perhaps. Seems worried over something, don't you think?"

"There's a big deal on," said the other, with a sage smile and lowered voice. "I happen to know that Blake is gunning after old Stockton. There'll be fur flying in this market in a few days. That's why Blake is so quiet. He's just been elected a director in the S. T. & L. Five years ago he didn't have a dollar. Twenty millions in five years is his record! And it hasn't enlarged his hat in the least. He tells a good story, sings a good song, and no man in the club can drink him under the table. By the way, he told me of a good joke on young Rogers. You know Rogers, of course?"

"Certainly. What's the story?"

"Rogers, as you know, is a high flyer and not afraid to risk his money on any fair chance. About a week ago he gave a dinner at Delmonico's, and at it were several Wall Street operators. Rogers is always on the lookout for market tips. As a rule he's rather cautious in his habits, but that night he drank a bit too much, and awoke the next morning in a rather muddled condition. But he was perfectly clear on one thing.

"Somebody had given him a tip to buy oats, and had convinced him that oats were a good thing. Who gave him this information, or what the argument was, Rogers could not recall, but the impres-

sion was vivid on his mind. Now, he knew nothing of oats, or of any other grain; had never dealt in a bushel in his life. But he went ahead as if he had operated in oats all his life.

"He bought one hundred thousand bushels, and the price began to climb. Then he bought more and more. The shorts got scared, ran to cover. On the final jump, Rogers covered and cleaned up $45,000.

"That night he hunted up his guests, and tried to find the man who had given him such valuable advice. None of them knew anything about it. Rogers was becoming worried. His coachman drove him home, and as he stepped from his carriage his man said:

"'Excuse me, sir, but did you order them oats? Last night you promised to buy fifty bushels. We're clean out, sir.'

"Rogers had found the man who had given him the tip to buy oats. He gave the fellow a hundred dollar bill, told him to buy fifty bushels of oats, and keep the change. Ha, ha, ha! Pretty good, don't you think. Mr. Blake told me that the other night."

The moment for action had arrived for James Blake. He compressed his lips, strode through the room and a moment later entered John's office. In the final struggle passion was triumphant, and he nerved himself as best he could for the ordeal.

John Burt looked up. The haggard expression on Blake's face alarmed him.

"What's happened, Jim? You're pale as a ghost!"

"It's a tooth," said Blake, rubbing his hand tenderly over his face. "I'm all right now, but it gave me a bad night. The dentist drew it this morning. I dined with General Carden. I—I suppose—"

"Has Jessie returned? Did you see her, Jim?"

John Burt leaned slightly forward, his powerful hands clasping the opposite arms of the chair. He looked earnestly and searchingly into Blake's face, and there was in his glance the confident hope of one, who after long years of waiting, had the right to expect favorable tidings.

"Miss Carden has not returned, but she is expected to sail next Tuesday," said Blake, nervously lighting a cigar. "I had hoped to bring you better news, John, but this is the best I can do. I thought it would be indelicate to ask General Carden for her address, since nothing but a cablegram could reach her before the sailing date."

A shade of disappointment passed over John Burt's face when Blake spoke, but a smile chased it away when he mentioned the time of her departure.

"You did right, Jim," he exclaimed. "Let's see: Tuesday is the thirteenth. I'm glad Jessie isn't superstitious. That should bring her to New York on the twentieth. That's thirteen days from now."

Blake turned ashen when the second thirteen was announced, but John's eyes were fixed on the innocent calendar, his thoughts were four thousand miles across a heaving ocean, and he did not notice the superstitious agony imprinted on the other's face. By what miserable chance had he selected that ominous date? Why should the fatal number repeat itself? For an instant he resolved to abandon his desperate plot.

It was not yet too late. He could laughingly proclaim it a jest, and tell John the truth. But the fair face and graceful form of Jessie Carden floated before his eyes and a mad, wild longing froze the words on his lips. He had cast the die—he would abide by the result. His judgment warned that the odds were overwhelming, but with insane daring he burned the bridges behind him. It was a gambler's chance—had not he been a gambler all his life?

John Burt leaned back in his chair and half closed his eyes.

"Two weeks, lacking a day," he mused aloud. "There is a long-standing account I should like to settle before Jessie returns," he said, turning to Blake, who had partly regained his composure.

"What is it?" asked Blake, with a lively show of interest.

"The elder Morris ruined General Carden as deliberately as ever one man did another," declared John Burt, his deep gray eyes flashing a menace as he brought his hand to the desk with a blow which

made it rattle. "The proceeds of that villainy have been turned over to his son. He is holding this depreciated stock as a club over General Carden's head, and has the insolence to connect Jessie's name with his. Five years ago Jessie Carden was the daughter of a man with an independent fortune. Two weeks from to-day Arthur Morris shall have made restitution to the man his father wronged. The certainty of this reconciles me to her longer absence. I shall win this campaign, Jim, and it's my last one. I am absolutely confident of the strength of my position. When did Hawkins wire that he would be here?"

"Thursday," answered Blake. Never before had John Burt betrayed so intense a feeling in any matter discussed between them. Every time he mentioned Jessie's name Blake felt as if a dagger were driven and twisted in his heart. John Burt walked back and forth like a lion, eager to crush down the puny restraints which held him from his prey. Every motion and gesture was instinct with curbed strength. Blake shrank back in his chair.

"I shall not wait for Hawkins," said John Burt, abruptly. "He owns a block of this L. & O. stock and I shall assume that I have his co-operation. I shall have control of L. & O. before he reaches New York. How did it close last night?"

"Twenty-eight and a half," replied Blake.

"It opens to-day at a quarter," said John Burt, standing over the ticker. "Take all offerings up

to thirty, but do not force matters. You understand, Jim? Watch it closely and keep me advised."

"I understand," said Blake, as he arose to go.

"Wait a minute," called John, as the other stood by the door. "Sam Rounds was in to see you yesterday, was he not?"

"Yes."

"Send for him at once. Tell him it's something important. When he comes, bring him in here and leave us alone until I give you word. Keep on buying Northwestern. Sell the Tractions. That's all."

Blake entered his own office and flung himself into a chair. He felt as if he had aged years in the hour that had passed.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

MEASURING LANCES

WHEN Randolph Morris retired in favor of his son he transferred no small burden of responsibility to the shoulders of the latter.

Arthur Morris inherited his father's money and his ambitions, but not his masterly grasp of affairs. Astute as he was in most things, Randolph Morris was deceived in his estimate of his son and heir. This error of judgment does credit to the parental love of the elder Morris, and must be condoned on that ground. To the fond eye of the father, Arthur possessed the very qualities which had founded the Morris fortunes. Yet by some strange alchemy, which preserved the external while transforming the hidden, what was judgment in the elder Morris became daring in Arthur, policy in the former degenerated to cunning in the latter, caution changed to covetousness, and conservatism to unscrupulousness. So impalpable were the surface indications that they might never have been discovered were it not for the results which followed Arthur's accession to the Morris dynasty.

Arthur Morris had little sympathy with that fine old conservatism which stops short of direct participation in corruption. He believed, as has been stated, that every man has his price, and was willing to pay it, provided it promised returns.

The renegade who, for a thousand dollars, sold a public right worth ten times the amount, still

considered Morris his benefactor, and held himself under obligations to his briber. This purchased loyalty is the secret of the success of political machines. It is that gratitude which has been so aptly defined as "a lively sense of favors to come." It is "the cohesive power of public plunder."

He was the controlling factor in a powerful bank, the acknowledged master of corrupt political influences, and a daring operator on the stock exchange—a compact trinity of seemingly irresistible power. His smile was sought; his frown dreaded. Until James Blake established himself in New York, no young millionaire was in a position to challenge his supremacy, and the wise ones predicted that, should Blake dare measure lances, he would go down to defeat.

Ambitious to pose as a Wall Street leader, Arthur Morris had assumed an enormous load of stocks, and the success of his ventures had given him the following which ever attends the leader in a rising market. In addition to this speculative risk, Morris had invested heavily in a local enterprise which had secured several valuable franchises, and was confidently in expectation of others at the hands of the city officials.

It will be sufficiently accurate to designate the Morris enterprise by the name of "The Cosmopolitan Improvement Company," and to state that its assets consisted in its acquired and prospective franchises. While purporting to afford relief from

existing monopolies, it was in fact nothing more nor less than a well-planned attempt to acquire public rights and force their sale upon threatened competitors. In the parlance of finance it was a "sand-bag." The speculative public estimated the value of the prospective robbery at nine millions of dollars. These seem small figures to-day, but in those modest years Arthur Morris was esteemed a king in his field of operation.

Modern finance was then in its infancy, and public plunder was wrapped in its swaddling clothes.

Arthur Morris took up the work so auspiciously begun by his father—the wrecking of the L. & O. railroad company. In this campaign, General Carden and many others had lost their fortunes. Morris held control of the bonds, and looked forward to the day when the stock would be wiped out and this splendid property fall into his hands. It was an open secret in railway circles that the L. & O. would then be absorbed by one of the two powerful companies which intersected its lines.

Neither Randolph Morris nor his son saw reason to believe that anything could interfere with the successful issue of their plans. It was a case of "freeze out" for the desperate but despairing minority stockholders, and for a long time the market temperature had been below zero. They doggedly awaited the day when the powerful Morris interest should make the final move.

John Burt detected the flaw in this conspiracy. Mr. Hawkins had guardedly confirmed his judgment and tentatively promised his support, and John Hawkins had yet to beat a retreat in railway strategy. Confident of the strength of his position, John Burt had already taken the initial steps for the control of L. & O. as has been narrated. He set aside three battalions of a million dollars each, and held them in reserve against the entrenched wealth in the Morris vaults.

Then he again scanned the field of action, and with unerring judgment placed his finger on the weakest point in the Morris defences. The Cosmopolitan Improvement Company was a rampart on paper. John Burt proposed to enfilade it. He wheeled four millions into position, with more in reserve if necessary. Then he threw out a legal skirmish line.

In James Blake's name was a large block of stock in the company whose interests were menaced by the Cosmopolitan. Though Blake had recently been elected a director in the former company, John Burt proceeded to make an independent investigation. The highest legal authority assured him that the franchises already granted to the Cosmopolitan were invalid.

As the crisis in his affairs neared, John Burt took a more direct charge of affairs. The trusted employees of James Blake & Company were informed that "John Burton" was a silent partner,

who represented large California interests, and that his orders must be followed without question. For months he had steadily converted his securities into money, which reposed in vaults to which he held the keys. The only stocks in Blake's name were those of the company menaced by the Cosmopolitan, and a few scattered blocks of L. & O.

Like a man-of-war stripped for battle, John Burt carried no encumbrances. He had mastered the secret of the stupendous efficiency of cash money in a Wall Street contest against alleged securities.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

ALDERMAN SAMUEL LEMUEL ROUNDS

IN response to James Blake's message, Alderman Samuel Rounds called and was conducted to the private office of the famous operator.

Only a few hours had passed since Blake treacherously had burst the bonds which years of friendship had welded between himself and John Burt. They were wretched, nagging hours. He looked longingly forward to the time when in Jessie's company he hoped to enjoy sweet payment for his perfidy. The excitement of a nervous market, and the favorable movement of stocks in which he was interested, had no effect on James Blake. The tape seemed burdened with the story of a murdered friendship. Two figures were ever before his eyes —John Burt, stern and unforgiving; Jessie Carden, radiant and lovable.

Blake had anticipated with zest the meeting between John Burt and Sam Rounds. It had been contemplated for several weeks, but now that the hour was at hand, he took little interest in it. In a vague way it seemed only another menace to his undoing. He found it difficult to respond to Sam's hearty greeting, and terminated the interview as soon as possible.

"Heou are ye, Jim; heou are ye!" exclaimed Sam, as he greeted Blake in his luxurious office. "Don't it beat time, as uncle Toby Haynes uster say, that you an' I are here in New York, an'

you are rich, an' I am—well, say fair to middlin'. There were only three of us young fellers 'round Rocky Woods; you an' John Burt an' me. Most all the rest of 'em was old folks. Never saw such a place as Rocky Woods fer old timers. None of 'em dies; they kinder dries up like an' blows away. You an' John an' me was the only boys in the neighborhood, an' two of us is here in New York—right here in the same buildin'. Do you suppose we'll ever hear from John Burt, Jim? I've allers said he'd turn up on top, some day or nother."

"Would you like to hear from him," asked Blake, without raising his eyes.

"Would I? D'ye know anything erbout him, Jim? Dew ye really?"

"There's a man in the next room who knows a lot about him," replied Blake. "That's why I sent for you. Come and meet him." He led the way, and the dazed Sam followed.

Blake opened John Burt's door and stood in the way as Sam entered. John was seated at his desk and did not turn his head or make a move when Blake said:

"Alderman Rounds wishes to speak to you."

Blake stepped outside and closed the door. John deliberately blotted an unfinished letter, rose and advanced to meet Sam, who stood awkwardly by the door, hat in hand.

"I am glad to meet you, Alderman Rounds," he said, extending his hand. "I have heard of you

and wish the pleasure of your acquaintance. Pray be seated, alderman."

The sharp blue eyes of the visitor were fixed on the speaker, and only for an instant was he in doubt. The tall, graceful youth he once knew in Massachusetts had developed into superb manhood, but the trimmed beard did not efface the lines of the resolute chin, and the Burt eyes—clear, calm and magnetic—were those of the lad he knew and admired in Rocky Woods.

"I know ye, John! God bless ye, John! Heou are ye, John Burt! I'm plumb tickled ter death ter see ye! Well, well, well!"

His honest eyes glistened as he threw his hat to the floor, and grasped John's hands with a grip which would have made the average man wince.

"And I'm glad to see you, Sam! It seems like coming back to life to meet you. How are you, old fellow? Sit down and tell me all about yourself and Rocky Woods."

"The last time I saw ye, John," he said, "was under them maple trees in front of the Bishop house. I reckon you ain't forgot that night. You galloped away in the dark on my horse an' I ain't seen ye since. Early next mornin' I went to your grandad's house. He was just gittin' ready to untie them constables that was after ye. He gave me a message to Captain Horton, down tew New Bedford, an' I took the early train an' went there. I reckoned you was comin' there, an' wanted awfully

tew wait fer ye, but knew it wan't safe, so I come back home. Now you begin at the place like in them stories which run in the *Fireside Companion* where it says 'to be continued in our next,' and keep right on up to the present time."

John laughed and gave Sam a hurried sketch of his career. He told of his voyage around Cape Horn, his arrival in San Francisco, the search for the mine described by the dying sailor, his meeting with Jim Blake, the discovery of the gold mine, his association with John Hawkins and the incidents which led to the formation of the firm of James Blake & Company. John said nothing to lead Sam to think that Blake was only a representative, but the shrewd Yankee guessed the truth.

As John proceeded with the tale of successes, which he modestly minimized or attributed to persistent good fortune, Sam's grin elongated and his homely face was incandescent with joy. When John had finished, the alderman could manifest his delight by no means other than executing a wild fandango.

"I swan, John, this is tew good tew be true!" he gasped, shaking hands again. "You ain't told me half the truth, an' ye don't have tew. I can guess the rest. You're James Blake & Company. You're the man who's taught these Wall Street chaps a lesson! You're the lad the papers mean when they write erbout 'The Young Wizard of Finance'! I'm proud of ye, John! Didn't I allers

say somethin' like this would happen? The last time I saw ye I told ye that ye was clean strain an' thoroughbred, an' that they couldn't down ye. I knows hosses, an' I knows somethin' erbout men, an' I'd pick ye fer a winner every time. An' you can't have too much good fortune to suit me, John, an' I don't want a thing from ye. I just like tew see ye win, because—well, because ye orter win."

"Thank you, Sam."

"Don't it beat thunder how things turn out?" observed Sam. "I saw Jim when he was down tew Rocky Woods a few months ago, an' when he told me that he was *the* Jim Blake, you could a' knocked me down with a willow switch. I said tew myself then, that had it been John Burt I wouldn't been surprised. An' now, by thunder, it was John Burt who did it after all. But how erbout Jim Blake, John? If you're James Blake & Company, who'n the dickens is Jim?"

"I am not James Blake & Company," said John with a smile. "I am the Company. Jim has a substantial interest in the firm, and has done much towards its success. Jim had a siege of bad luck in California, but he's now solidly on his feet, and deserves all the reputation he has made."

"I'm mighty glad tew hear it," declared Sam, "but I reckon I can guess who does the thinkin'. Jim's a fine feller, but he allers was reckless an' careless, though mebbe he's outgrown it. Where is he? I suppose he thinks he played a fine joke on

me. I like such jokes. Send fer him, John, an' we'll all talk it over together, like we did in the old days back in Rocky Woods."

John pressed a button and an attendant responded.

"If Mr. Blake is not busy, say that I should like to see him," he said.

"There's one thing you haven't told me erbout," said Sam, shifting his feet awkwardly. "I don't want tew pry into your private affairs, John, but have you seen her yet—I mean Miss Carden?"

The door opened softly and James Blake entered so silently that neither heard him.

"I have not seen Miss Carden," replied John. "She is not in the city."

"Yes she is," asserted Sam eagerly. "I saw her yesterday ridin' down Fifth Avenue."

John Burt had seated himself at his desk, which he was putting in order. Surprised at Sam's positive statement he turned quickly. He saw Blake standing by the door. A shaft of sunlight fell full on his face. His hand was on the knob, and he stood motionless as if riveted to the floor. There was that in his expression and attitude which challenged John Burt's attention.

Students of psychological phenomena may offer an explanation of the impalpable impression received by John Burt in that moment. His was the dominating mind; Blake's the subjective. By that mysterious telepathy which mocks analysis and scorns

description, a message passed to John Burt. He yet lacked the cipher to translate it. It dotted no definite warning and sounded none but a vague suspicion, but the vibration, though faint, was discordant. There are natures so delicately constituted that their consciousness stands ever on guard—a sleepless sentinel against smiling treachery.

John Burt glanced at Blake and turned to Sam.

"You surely are mistaken, Sam," he said. "Miss Carden is abroad and will not sail for New York for several days."

"Is that so?" Sam ran his fingers through his red hair and looked puzzled. "That's mighty curious! I've got an eye like a hawk, an' I'd a sworn it was her. I met her once or twice when she was here before, an' thought sure it was her I saw yesterday. Must be wrong though. Guess I'd better begin wearin' glasses. So ye ain't seen her yet, John. I'll bet she'll be plumb glad tew meet you. We was talkin' erbout ye the last time I saw her. That's two years ago. She hadn't forgot ye, John."

Blake closed the door and Sam turned at the click of the latch.

"Why, here's Jim! Well, well, well! Here we are all together! Thought I wouldn't know John, didn't ye? I knew him the moment he spoke, didn't I, John? And so old Rocky Woods has turned out the great firm of James Blake & Company! I want to congratulate both of ye. Are ye all through work? Let's go somewhere where we

can have somethin' in honor of this mee-mentous occasion. Come on, boys, it's my treat! The last time I treated John, I bought him an' Jessie sody an' ice cream. Haw, haw, haw! Sody an' ice cream! D'ye remember it, John? I wish she was here now. I'd buy somethin' better'n ice cream an' sody water. Come on, let's go somewhere."

"Many thanks for your invitation, Sam, and I'd like to accept it, but it's hardly safe," said John. "In a few weeks I hope to enjoy your hospitality and to extend mine, but until that time I am 'John Burton' and you don't know me. Sit down, Sam, we wish to discuss a business matter, or perhaps more accurately speaking, a political one. Jim, send one of the clerks out for a magnum, and we'll drink Sam's health here. I'm still an exile, Sam. Until an hour ago, Jim was the only man in New York who was acquainted with me. But I'm filing away my prison bars, and you can help me, Sam."

"I can help you?" echoed Sam. "You just call on me fer anything except murder—an' I might manage that."

Blake had been singularly quiet, but he joined in the laugh which followed, and left the room to order the proposed refreshment.

"Jim ain't lookin' well," said Sam, sympathetically. "Looks sorter peaked like; don't you think so, John?"

"I noticed that this morning, and told him so," John replied. "He has been under a severe strain

for weeks, and possibly the change of climate doesn't agree with him. I'm going to send him into the country for a few days. He is entitled to a rest, and there's no reason why he shouldn't have it. Jim and I have been through many hard fought engagements together, but at last a decisive victory is in sight. Do you know Arthur Morris?" he asked abruptly.

"You bet I do; but he don't know me except as Alderman Samuel L. Rounds. Why d'ye ask, John?"

Blake returned and took a seat near Sam.

"Our firm is interested in the ordinances submitted to your Board, by the terms of which new and amended franchises are proposed for the Cosmopolitan Improvement Company," began John. "I have studied the record of the proceedings, and find that you spoke and voted against these bills when originally proposed and passed. Do you mind telling me, Sam, what you know of this matter? Can you do so without violating your trust?"

"You bet I can; an' I know a lot," declared Sam. "I was comin' over to tell Jim, anyhow, an' I reckon I know what you are after. There's no use of my tellin' ye erbout this fellow Morris. He's nothin' more er less'n a high toned thief. He owns, or thinks he owns the Board of Aldermen. Perhaps he does, but to my way of thinkin' he's likely ter be fooled. There's er lot of new members who are agin him, an' some of the old ones that he bought

before want ter be bought agin, an' they have raised their price. Morris was tew my house last night. Say, John, I wonder what he'd think if he knew I was in your office now? Darned if this ain't a funny world!"

"What did Morris have to say?" asked Blake, who did not need to counterfeit an interest in this new development.

"He had er lot tew say," replied Sam. "A year ago he offered me five thousand dollars fer my vote. I told him then that I couldn't do business with him, an' he managed tew pass his bills agin my vote an' infloo-ence. Guess he wants me pretty bad just now. Last night he raised his price tew ten thousand."

"What did you answer him, Sam?" asked John Burt.

"I told him I'd think erbout it," and Sam's eyes twinkled beneath their red eyebrows. "I said tew him, 'Mr. Morris,' says I, 'ten thousand dollars is an awful lot of money, an' I can use it mighty handy in my business,' I says, 'but I'm afraid my people will think I've been improperly infloo-enced,'" and Sam laughed as if this were the greatest joke he had ever perpetrated.

"'These ordinances are all right an' fer the benefit of the public,' says this self-sacrificing Morris. 'I'm sorry, Alderman Rounds,' he says, 'that you're prejudiced agin them. If you'll change your mind there's six other aldermen who'll dew the same,

an' when the bills are passed ye gits ten thousand more.'"

"That's what he said tew me," continued Sam, "an' I told him that he was a liberal sport, an' that I'd take his offer under consideration an' hold it in abee-ance. Then I asked him who the six others were who'd follow my lead, an' he told me. The seven of us gives him a majority."

"Was that all?"

"I should say not," declared Sam. "I said tew him, says I, 'Mr. Morris, I knows all these aldermen, an' they are my personal friends. I'm a business gent,' I says, 'havin' been in hoss tradin' an' in the commission business all my life, an' perhaps this game is right in my line. Suppose I contract,' says I, 'to deliver all these seven votes,' I says, 'fer the lump sum of eighty thousand dollars: forty per cent. down in cash, an' the balance deposited with a third party an' paid over when the bills is passed?' Morris thought a while an' said he'd be glad tew dew that. I told him I'd think erbout it a lot an' let him know in a few days."

Sam paused and looked keenly first at John Burt and then at Blake.

"I hope you don't think, John," he said, "that I'd any idea of takin' his offer. I—"

"I certainly do not," said John. "I'm simply astounded that Morris has done the one thing I would have him do. This is a rare piece of good fortune, Jim, isn't it?"

"It's great luck," declared Blake, with genuine enthusiasm. Under the stimulus of Sam's disclosures he forgot Jessie for the moment, and again took his position side by side with John Burt.

"This is remarkable, Sam!" he exclaimed. "John and I have been planning to catch Morris at some such game as this, and have hoped that you might help us. And now Morris has set and sprung his own trap and caught himself in its jaws."

"I reckon I know what tew dew," asserted Sam. "I'm tew see these six aldermen that Morris needs, an' then I'm goin' tew meet him an' make my report. If it's all right he's tew pay me thirty-two thousand dollars in cash, an' put the balance up with some man that I name. I have a rich friend in mind that Morris thinks is all right, an' one that I know is all right, so far's I'm concerned. There's three of these aldermen that Morris couldn't buy if he offered each of 'em the whole lump sum, an' I can handle the others."

"That is all right so far as it goes," interrupted John Burt, "but Morris is shrewd enough to demand positive pledges before paying over any such amount of money. You should have your aldermanic friends sign and execute written promises to support these bills, and keep certified copies of the same. These agreements will not be binding, legally or morally. I will consult my attorney in this matter and let you know the best methods of procedure."

"All right, John; anything you say goes with me," laughed Sam. "When shall I drop in agin?"

"Early to-morrow morning," replied John. "Send word to Judge Wilson, Jim, that I shall call on him this evening."

The roar of the Wall Street district subsided to a gentle murmur. The great office buildings had poured forth their armies of clerks and customers, and the streets once thronged with excited men now resounded to the laughter of children and the cries of the few belated hawkers. The sun dropped behind the spire of old Trinity, and in its shadow these three men drank one another's health in honor of their strange reunion.

Sam Rounds was proud and happy, and the bookkeepers in the outer offices smiled in sympathy to the echo of his laughter. John Burt was pleased, but thoughtful, and a gleam of coming triumph was in his eyes as he touched glasses with his companions.

James Blake made no effort to enter into the spirit of the occasion, and he fancied that his laugh sounded hollow and that his smiles lacked sincerity. When he found John Burt's gaze upon him he unconsciously averted his eyes.

Like those who dream of being naked in the streets, and who struggle vainly to cover their shame, James Blake lived in a waking nightmare, with his soul bare to the searching gaze of the man he had wronged.

CHAPTER THIRTY

ON THIN ICE

BLAKE found a ready excuse to call on General Carden. The pronounced activity in L. & O. served as a pretext for an evening visit to the Bishop residence. Blake was greeted by the old banker with dignified cordiality, and his heart beat high as Jessie frankly welcomed him.

To his enraptured fancy she was the incarnation of all that is lovable and fascinating in woman. Nor was it matter for wonder. The dark eyes had the melting tenderness of blue, and the proud little mouth was bewitching in laughter or repose. Her hair, falling back from the pure brow, was a crown which needed no gems to enhance the queenly beauty of its wearer. A princess gown revealed blending curves, and every movement was instinct with that grace which nature bequeaths to perfect womanhood.

Under the witchery of her presence, James Blake wondered that he had hesitated for a moment to risk life itself to win her. What was friendship, loyalty, fame or fortune in the balance with one smile from the woman he had learned so suddenly to love? His whole being thrilled with keenest joy as he felt the faint clasp of her hand, and his ears drank in the melody of her voice.

"Papa was saying at dinner that the market had taken a decided turn, and that he thought you would call this evening," said Jessie. "He felt so

certain of it that we postponed a theatre party. You are to be congratulated, papa, on your intuition."

"I am the one to be congratulated," said Blake, with a smile and a bow, "but I should preface my self-felicitations with an apology for the informality of my call. If General Carden will stand sponsor for my plea that business exigencies cover a multitude of social improprieties, I may hope for forgiveness; and, if forgiven, I warn you that I shall commit the offense again!"

A delicate flush suffused Jessie's face and brightened the radiance of her eyes.

"You will never become an outcast by such transgressions," she laughed. "I will leave you and papa to your business plottings. Edith is here, and when you have ended your serious affairs perhaps you will join us and we can have music or cards."

Blake's face glowed with a pleasure no formal words could conceal.

"Our business will be ended in a minute," he said. "I know the general has not forgotten the defeat we administered to him the other evening, and as an old soldier I fancy he is eager to wipe out his repulse with a victory."

"He certainly is," asserted General Carden. "I'm so sure of winning to-night that on behalf of Edith I challenge you and Jessie to a rubber of whist, with a box to-morrow evening for Booth's production of 'A Fool's Revenge' as a wager!"

"Done!" exclaimed Blake.

"I warn you that papa generally wins when something is at stake," said Jessie, "but I'll do the best I can, and hope for good luck to offset my poor playing."

She excused herself, and Blake and General Carden plunged into stock technicalities.

"I wished you to know the cause of to-day's advance in L. & O.," explained Blake. "For reasons you surmise, I am picking up blocks of this stock. It will go higher to-morrow, and then a slump may follow, but you need not worry whether it advances or declines. I have the market under control. From present indications you will be called on to exercise your option inside of ten days."

"I have confidence in your judgment and you can rely on prompt execution of your instructions," said General Carden. "For twenty years I have been identified with Wall Street, and I understand its ethics. In this campaign you are the general. You will find me a loyal aide."

There was more talk, but since Blake had nothing of importance to disclose, the conference soon ended.

Blake was triumphantly satisfied with his progress. He rightly interpreted General Carden's suggestion of a theatre party as a tacit permission to pay his addresses to Jessie Carden. Later in the evening, through a chance remark by Miss Hancock, he learned that they had declined a theatre invita-

tion from Arthur Morris. He no longer had the slightest fear of Morris. He felt sure of the consent and even the support of General Carden in his suit for the hand of his daughter.

The whist game was closely contested, but as Jessie had predicted the general and Edith won a hard-fought victory, and Blake agreed to pay the wager the evening following.

They strolled into the conservatory. For the first time he was alone with Jessie Carden, and a sense of exalted happiness surged over him.

How dainty she looked in this bower of palms and flowers! The graceful Naiad, whose beautifully chiseled form was half revealed in the splashing waters of the fountain, seemed gross and material compared to the rare being by his side. Already he tasted that bliss which comes with a sense of ownership; the proud satiety of possession. Surely fate had decreed that she should be his!

Only by an effort did he restrain himself from making an avowal of his passion. To James Blake nature had been lavish with impulse and niggardly with self-control. All of the good and all of the evil in his being responded to the command of his desires. He had no brake to apply its stern friction to the wild speed of his longings. Like a child he reached out for that which attracted him, and like a child he had been punished for his temerity.

Blake had formulated no plan of campaign for the conquest of Jessie Carden. The light of her

eyes and the radiance of her beauty were to him as *ignes fatui*, and drew him onward at a dizzy pace.

He talked of California and of Rocky Woods, but his eyes spoke love and his deep rich voice was tender. Fair woman is seldom blind to the spell cast by her charms, and it is probable that Jessie was aware of Blake's admiration; but she neither recognized nor took advantage of it. He was too good a judge of the heart of a woman to mistake her polite interest for any stronger sentiment. He stood demanding entrance to the outer gate of friendship, when he longed to storm the inner halls of love.

In war Blake would have been a cavalry leader, recklessly urging his forces into the enemy's country, risking all upon a headlong charge. In love he was a desperado, inspired by a gambler's faith in fortune. Though he knew that the odds were overwhelmingly against him, and that one false step meant irretrievable defeat, he shut his eyes to the perils which encompassed him.

He knew the risk he ran in appearing in public with Jessie Carden, but he did not hesitate to secure a box for the Booth performance. Had he not already passed unscathed through Sam Rounds's disclosure? That was an awful moment, and the blood left his face whenever he thought of it, but he argued the outcome as a favorable omen. He knew John's habits so well that he had little fear their paths would cross in the great city. John

lived in his office or in his secluded up-town apartments, and Blake had attempted in vain to induce his partner to taste the pleasures of the metropolis.

"Not yet, Jim," he would say. "I've been a recluse for five years and can wait a few weeks, or even months, longer. But I've not lost my desire for enjoyment. On the contrary, I've stored it away as a miser hoards gold, and I propose to exact full payment from the world of frivolity when the time comes. I may be a bit dull when I first cast off my prison garb, and it's likely I'll be awkward, but you shall be my guide and mentor."

There were four in the theatre party—the general and Edith, Blake and Jessie Carden. Blake escorted Jessie to the front of the box and took his place by her side. The peerless Booth was at the height of his power, and a brilliant audience had assembled to do him honor. The vast auditorium was a mass of color. The boxes were thronged with fair women, but all eyes were turned on Jessie Carden and her handsome escort. She had been absent from New York for two years, and only a few recognized her as the niece of Thomas Bishop, and as one whose debut had been a society sensation.

James Blake was even less known, though his name had been made familiar by the fame of Wall Street achievements with which he was publicly identified. Scattered through the audience were a score or more of men who knew Blake as a club

member or as an operator. By whispered word and polite inquiry the information spread until all in the gilded circle knew the names of the handsome couple.

The first act was nearly over when a thick-set young man, with a soft, florid face, sauntered into the box directly across the orchestra from Blake and Jessie. Both recognized the new comer as Arthur Morris, and both felt a secret joy that he was present. His name had never been mentioned between them, nor was Jessie aware that Blake was acquainted with the young banker who had forced himself into her life.

Like a flash the thought came to Blake that, by means of his rival, he could enhance the chances of a speedy success with the woman by his side. In a dim way this possibility had occurred to him before, but now that Morris was where he could hurl a glove as a challenge at his feet, Blake welcomed the incident, and saw in it boundless possibilities for good fortune.

"Do you notice the gentleman sitting alone in the box opposite?" asked Blake as the curtain fell.

"Yes," answered Jessie, raising her eyes and looking at Blake with a puzzled smile. "Why do you ask?"

"That's Arthur Morris, the banker."

"Do you know him?"

"I've met him in a business way and also socially," replied Blake, carelessly. "We belong to

the same clubs, and I've been his guest. Would you like to meet him?"

"I shall be delighted!" exclaimed Jessie, who could not resist the temptation.

At that instant Morris directed his opera-glass for the first time at the Blake box. The smile of joy when he recognized Jessie turned to one of blank amazement when he saw James Blake. Jessie conveniently looked in another direction. Edith touched her on the shoulder.

"Do you see Mr. Morris?" she whispered.

"Mr. Blake is going to call him over and introduce him," returned Jessie, with a warning finger to her lips. "If you laugh, Edith, I shall never speak to you again. This will be my third, and I trust my last introduction to him. Ah, he is coming! I hope papa will not spoil the treat."

In response to Blake's signal the dazed Morris was picking his way through the crush. Blake led Jessie to the rear of the box, where General Carden was chatting with a number of old friends.

"Miss Carden, permit me to present my friend, Mr. Arthur Morris."

Jessie smiled and offered her hand.

"I'm glad to meet any friend of Mr. Blake's," she said.

"By Jove, old man, this is a joke on you, or me—or both of us!" stammered Morris. "Charmed to meet you again, Miss Carden! Ah, Miss Hancock, you are looking more lovely than

ever! How are you, General Carden? This is a good one on you, Blake! I've been acquainted with Miss Carden for years—five years, is it not, Miss Carden?"

Jessie's laughing eyes admitted the truth and Blake looked properly confused.

"I shall have to forgive you," Blake said to Jessie, "but you are taking an unfair advantage of a wild Westerner."

Morris looked from Blake to Jessie, but no solution of the puzzle offered itself either in the dark eyes of his rival or in the amused glance of the other. The situation was particularly embarrassing to General Carden, and he glanced appealingly into the face of his daughter, who seemed not in the least dismayed by this unexpected complication.

"You have the reputation of being lucky," said Morris, laying his hand familiarly on Blake's shoulder, "but I didn't know that your good fortune extended to an acquaintance with Miss Carden."

There was a shade of insolence in his tone, and an air which did not escape any of his three listeners. It hinted that he was General Carden's employer; that the latter was under obligations to him, and that Jessie was pledged to pay the debt. But Blake was a good actor in the little comedy between the acts. He held the key to the solution. Of all the figures in this complicated drama, he alone knew the motives which influenced the other players.

"I might say the same to you, my dear Morris," said Blake with airy confidence. "Had you taken me into your confidence sufficiently to mention Miss Carden's name, I would have told you of what you rightly call my good fortune. Were it in good form I would willingly wager a supper that I met Miss Carden before you did. Have I your permission, Miss Carden, to challenge Mr. Morris to such a wager?"

"You have," laughed Jessie.

General Carden's face was a study, but Morris was too dumbfounded to notice it. Blake's words had reminded him of the night he first met the young magnate from California. He recalled Blake's study of the portrait, and his assertion that he had met Jessie Carden in Rocky Woods. He then had no reason to doubt Blake's word, but now he dared not admit it. He had only one card to play.

"I accept your wager," he said.

"When I was a boy I lived in Rocky Woods," began Blake. "Miss Carden probably has told you that she spent the summers with Mr. and Mrs. Bishop, who still have a country place near there. That was—let's see—seven or eight years ago. Miss Carden was then a little girl, but I remember her distinctly. After my streak of luck in California I visited Rocky Woods but found none of my old acquaintances. I learned, however, that the general and Miss Carden were living in New York, and at the earliest opportunity I took advantage of the

slight acquaintance I had formed when a very young man. That's all. If you demand evidence, I have not the slightest doubt that Miss Carden or the general will furnish it."

To Jessie's amusement and General Carden's relief Morris declared that he did not doubt Blake's word. There was that in the latter's manner which warned Morris not to insist on fuller details. Though he knew full well that Blake had boldly installed himself as a rival by some method beyond his ken, he was too politic to press the subject without being sure of his ground. The fires of jealousy burned fiercely in him, but he concealed his rage. From that moment he hated Blake with all the malevolence of a vicious nature, but he turned with a smile on his sensuous lips.

"I admit myself done, old chap," he declared. "We shall have a jolly dinner in honor of my defeat. Say Tuesday, at Sherry's? Will that be convenient, Miss Carden? Good! And you, Miss Hancock? Splendid! We shall expect you, General Carden. There goes the curtain."

Morris smiled gaily and excused himself, and Blake and Jessie resumed their places.

"You have a wonderful memory, Mr. Blake," said Jessie, behind her fan. "I could not help thinking, while you were enlightening Mr. Morris, that perhaps you had unconsciously confused your Rocky Mountain career with that of your boyhood friend, John Burt."

The smile on Blake's lips died and the color mounted to his temples.

"Perhaps—perhaps I did," he said, after an awkward pause. A thousand thoughts and fears came to him. He dared not lift his eyes for fear of encountering the gaze of the man he had wronged. The voices on the stage sounded far away. Jessie's innocent words: "your boyhood friend, John Burt," had hurled him for the moment from the heaven of bliss to the nadir of remorse. Opportunely for his confusion, Edith called Jessie's attention to some trifling matter, and in the interval he regained his composure.

"I hardly knew what to say to Mr. Morris," he explained hurriedly. "It's most embarrassing that he should happen to be here to-night. I'll tell you some time why I said what I did. I believe I succeeded in diverting all suspicion that the general and I have business relations, but it's a shame that you should be used as a shield. In my clumsy way I was trying to protect your father's interests, and I hope you'll accept that as my excuse."

"I think I understand," returned Jessie. "Pray do not disturb yourself on account of this incident, Mr. Blake. I'm sure I shall not. Here comes Mr. Booth! Isn't he grand!"

The play ended, and Arthur Morris again joined the Blake party as they waited for the crowd to leave. He declined Blake's invitation to supper, pleading a previous engagement.

"I'm chaperoning the governor," he laughed, pointing to his father, whose ponderous bulk blocked an adjacent aisle. "By the way, Blake, did you follow my tip on L. & O.? Bought a little, did you? That's right; keep on buying it. It's going up, as I said it would. You needn't be afraid of it. It's good for ten points in the next ten days. Well, good-night. Don't forget our little dinner party on Tuesday evening."

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

THE MANTLE OF CHARITY

IT was late on Sunday morning when Blake awoke. For years he and John had dined at four o'clock on Sundays, and they had continued the custom in New York. Blake looked forward to what had ever been a pleasure, with an aversion not unmixed with fear.

The preceding evening had been a season of unalloyed happiness. Jessie had been most gracious. He had monopolized her attention during the supper, and from numberless little incidents he argued that he was in her good favor. She had not taken offense at his thinly-veiled compliments, and she looked surpassingly lovely as the faint flush of pleased confusion suffused her face. General Carden had clasped his hand and congratulated him on his "diplomacy" in answering Morris's pointed question.

He rang a bell and his valet responded.

"Mr. Burton will dine with me at four o'clock," he said. "Until he leaves I'm not home to any one. Make no mistake about this, Roberts. Prepare my bath, and let me have the morning papers. I want a light breakfast."

Blake carelessly glanced over a newspaper. His attention was held for a few minutes by such events as a society scandal, a Brooklyn fire, an atrocious Chicago murder, and a threatened railroad strike. With a yawn he was about to lay the

paper aside, when he noticed a headline descriptive of the Booth performance of the preceding evening.

It is one of the secrets of newspaperdom that the average subscriber loves to read of that he has seen, rather than of events beyond his range of vision. Since Blake knew all about the Booth performance, he was keenly interested in studying the published account of it. It was a long article, but Blake was so engrossed in its reading that he paid no attention to the valet's announcement that his bath was ready.

To the abject astonishment of that trained and sedate servant, Blake gave a cry of terror and sprang from his couch, upsetting a small table as he rushed towards the window.

He held the paper with a clutch as if it were a serpent struggling to bury its fangs in his breast. In the full flood of light he again read a paragraph which had frozen the blood in his veins. It was as follows:

> "Among the box-holders at this notable performance was James Blake, the famous Wall Street operator and financier, whose recent advent in New York was signalized by a market movement not yet forgotten. Mr. Blake's guests were General Marshall Carden, Miss Jessie Carden and Miss Edith Hancock, of Cohasset, Massachusetts. Miss Carden returned a week ago, from a two-years' sojourn abroad, where her musical and artistic talents attracted nearly as much attention as her rare beauty. Mr. Arthur Morris was a frequent visitor to the Blake box. Gossip has been busy in associating his name with that of Miss Carden as an accepted suitor, but the rumor may be authoritatively denied."

"My God! this is awful—awful—awful!" groaned Blake. "Get out of here!" he shouted to his man. "What the devil do you mean, standing there gaping at me? Bring me a glass of brandy, and be quick about it!"

He hurled the paper from him and sank back into a chair.

The door bell rang, and at the sound every nerve tingled with terror. Was it John Burt? James Blake was not a coward—as he had proved a score of times when his mettle was put to the test—but from the moment he went down to defeat beneath sturdy blows he had respected his boyhood conqueror. Since that hour John Burt had won his allegiance in a thousand ways—had shown himself the master mind on unnumbered fields. And in this moment, cowed by the scourging of a guilty conscience, he could not invoke a bravado to take the place of courage.

The valet opened the door and Blake heard the piping voice of a telegraph messenger. He drew a long breath and tore open the envelope. The message was from John Hawkins, and stated that he would arrive in New York on the following morning.

The little clock spasmodically jingled the hour of noon. In four short hours he would face John Burt! He drank the brandy at a gulp, and plunged into a cool bath. Its cool waters did not bring their wonted exhilaration. He glared at the tempting breakfast, but could not taste it.

"Take that stuff away and bring me more brandy," he ordered.

Again he read the dreaded paragraph. It had a fascination he could not resist. His first impulse had been flight, but the two portions of liquor were not without effect.

"Perhaps John won't see it," he reflected. "I don't believe he pays any attention to theatrical news. He has often said that he has no time to wade through the gossip and tittle-tattle of a New York paper. There's no one to call his notice to that paragraph. Yes there is—Sam Rounds! Well, that's a thousand to one shot. I wonder if it was in any other papers?"

He sent for all the Sunday journals and eagerly scanned them for mention of the theatre party, but to his great relief found that it appeared only in the one paper. Again he helped himself to the brandy.

"Come to think of it, John don't read that cursed paper!" he exclaimed half aloud. "It's only an accident that I happened to see it. If I hadn't been there last night I never would have glanced below the headline. What chance is there for John to see it? Not one in a million!"

He paced up and down the room, and paused to survey his reflection in a mirror. His face was drawn, and dark circles showed under his eyes. The decanter was his only friend. The grave face of the valet did not disclose the astonishment he

felt over the conduct of his employer. Blake was almost abstemious in his habits, and his sideboard was more of an ornament than a utility. In this he had wisely patterned himself after John Burt.

"Shall I serve breakfast now, sir?" asked Roberts.

Blake answered with a sullen negative and tossed off his fourth brandy. It sounded a new note in the scale of stimulation.

"I don't see why I should go into such a beastly funk over this affair!" he muttered. "It's no crime to be in love with a woman. She doesn't belong to him. They're not even engaged. Suppose he does love her? So do I. What if he did meet her first? A woman is not something to be discovered and pre-empted like a gold mine."

As the hours sped by and the dark red line in the decanter dropped lower and lower, Blake's courage aroused to such a pitch that he welcomed the coming of John Burt.

"By God, we'll settle this matter now and here!" he exclaimed as he lurched unsteadily about the room. "John Burt nor any other man shall stand between me and Jessie Carden! I'll show him the paper and ask him what he's going to do about it! He's lorded it over me long enough! Let him come on! I'll meet him face to face! I'll—"

The hall bell rang with that clear precision which comes from the pressure of an insistent hand. At the same instant the little clock hammered the

hour of four. The valet opened the door and John Burt entered.

For a moment Blake did not recognize him. The moustache and beard had disappeared, and the strong regular lines of John Burt's face were in perfect harmony with the keen, calm and discerning eyes.

The contrast between the two men was startling. John Burt, erect, self-possessed, faultlessly apparelled, and invigorated by a brisk three mile walk; James Blake, disheveled, distraught, and on the verge of a physical collapse.

Once again in the presence of John Burt and under the glance of those commanding eyes, the brute courage inspired by liquor evaporated. He looked into John's face with a sickly grin, but no words came to his lips.

"Hello, Jim; what's the matter with you?"

There was a cordial note in John's voice and sympathy in his face. Blake's eyes and faculties were blurred, but he felt that his friend harbored neither suspicion nor malice. A sense of relief came to him, but in the consequent mental reaction the brandy was all potent.

"M'all right, John, ol' fellow; m'all right! Glad to see ye, dear ol' John! Have a drink, John! Glad to see ye!"

He swayed and fell into John Burt's arms. His flushed face and reeking breath told their own story without the help of the emptied decanter. Blake

weighed two hundred pounds, but John picked him up and laid him on the couch as if he were a child.

"You're knocked out, Jim," he said. "Take a nap, old man, and you'll be all right when you wake up."

With a dull smile on his lips Blake sank into a deep slumber.

The minute hand of the little clock crawled half its way around the circle before John Burt left the side of his friend. His eyes were fixed on the motionless figure, but his thoughts wandered far away.

John Burt knew as positively as one can know without ocular or visual proof that Blake was harboring a secret which was of vital concern to both of them. He did not need this new incident to strengthen the evidence furnished by his intuition. He had not been deceived by Blake's careless manner during the forty-eight hours which had passed.

But what was the secret? What had arisen to strike a jangling note in the harmony of their friendship? What motive could Blake have for mystery or evasion? Was he piqued or jealous that the hour was near when the world would know that another was the commanding genius of the firm of James Blake & Company?

This latter question answered itself. John Burt knew that Blake was unselfish in such matters, and that he eagerly looked forward to the day when his

unearned fame would fall on another. He must seek a motive elsewhere. Was Blake in love? That was a possibility, but why should he make a secret of his love affairs at that late day? What woman could come between them? Only one in all the world.

The thought of Jessie Carden in this connection was so grotesque that John attempted to dismiss it, but despite all efforts the figure of the woman he loved constantly arose before him, associated in a vague way with Blake's strange conduct.

Blake groaned and muttered in his sleep. At first his words were incoherent, but as his excitement grew his voice became distinct, and in a higher key he exclaimed:

"This is awful—awful! What shall I do; what shall I do? I love her! I love her, and no one shall stand between us; no one, by God! no one, not even—" The sentence ended in a moan and again he sank into quiet slumber.

John walked across the room and gazed for moments from out the opened window. It was a perfect day in early autumn, but he felt oppressed as if under the influence of a deepening shadow. He glanced over Blake's collection of books, but saw none which offered diversion. Pacing up and down the room he stepped on a crumpled newspaper. The rustle disturbed him. He picked it up, glanced carelessly at the date and name and ran his eye over the pages.

The first words that caught his attention were "Miss Jessie Carden." It was as if they were illuminated. John Burt stood like a statue and read the paragraph which had thrown Blake into a frenzy of fear.

Every word burned itself into his brain. Instinctively he drew back like one menaced by a blow struck in the dark. Then the enormity of the thing came to him. Crushing the paper in his hand, he strode across the room and towered over the figure of the man who had requited years of friendship with an act of treachery.

Blake's face was turned towards him—the handsome, clear-cut features of the one he had known since boyhood. His breathing was as deep and regular as that of an innocent child. The lips were slightly parted in a smile. A tumbled lock of wavy hair showed black against the pure olive of his brow. The neck was white and bare, and seemed to invite the clutch of strangling fingers.

For an instant an impulse to strike this man dead in his sleep came to John Burt. By a supreme effort he drew away from the couch and gazed with horror at the helpless figure of the one he had known as a friend. Then a flood of feeling checked the swelling tide of his rage.

"How could you do such a thing, Jim?" he exclaimed, unconsciously aloud.

A deep sigh from the sleeper was the only response. It breathed of helpless sorrow and un-

availing contrition. John Burt turned away and gazed with flooded eyes at the dancing sunlight.

It was all so unreal that it seemed a mockery. James Blake and Jessie Carden! His trusted partner covertly aspiring to the love of the woman to whom he had plighted his troth!

"He loves her!" was the cry that sounded in his ears. "He has met her and has concealed the fact from me! He has come to me with lies on his lips and deceit in his heart! How could you do it, Jim; how dared you do it? While I have been striving to make her happy, you have been false to me and to our friendship. He loves her. Poor Jim; poor Jim! She must be very beautiful. She is here in New York, not a mile from this spot. She knows not if I be dead or alive. Perhaps he has told her I am dead?"

He walked noiselessly up and down the room, racked by conflicting emotions. At times he paused to look into the face of the man who had wronged and tortured him. He had conquered his desire to exact immediate vengeance and vainly strove to find a possible excuse for Blake's action. It was useless.

The truth stood clearly revealed. Blake had met Jessie Carden, fallen in love with her, and deceived John Burt. Sam Rounds was not mistaken.

Never for a moment did John doubt Jessie's constancy. The joy of knowing that she was again in New York, and the certainty that he soon should

see her, was turned to sorrow by the disclosure which had been made. By degrees his hatred of Blake's act was transformed into pity for the one who had fallen in consequence of it. Blake was doomed as the victim of his weakness and folly.

How could he help Blake to save himself before it was irretrievably too late?

John Burt knew Blake better than the latter knew himself. He read Blake's character as a keen-eyed man scans bold type in the broad glare of light. He detected that strain of weakness, that lack of self-restraint, which made the other powerless in the face of temptation. He marked how the threads of that damning fault were woven into the splendid fabric of a generous, loving nature. He felt that Blake was no more to blame for this defect than is a diamond which has been fused in elemental heat, and whose one blistered flaw mars its brilliancy.

Few men combine resistless tenacity of purpose with charity for the short-comings of others. Aggressive men rarely pause in their dizzy climb to consider, much less to condone, that weakness which has caused others to fall.

If ever a time existed when Blake stood in need of such a friend as John Burt, it was in this hour when passion had triumphed over loyalty, and when outraged conscience scourged him with a stinging lash.

For hours John Burt concentrated his mind on

the strange problem which had so suddenly arisen. Slowly the tangled skein unraveled itself, and he thought he saw his way clear. At times a wave of anger swept over him, but in the end charity won against odds which seemed overwhelming.

He resolved not to make himself known to Jessie until Blake had been given a chance to retrace his steps. This delay in meeting the woman he loved, and for whom he had labored and waited weary years, was the crowning sacrifice, but when John had decided upon it, a sense of happiness stole over him. Somehow he felt that Jessie was in sympathy with his plans.

It was dark when Blake awoke from his stupor. He raised himself on his elbows and stared wildly about the room until his eyes rested on John Burt. His sleep had been harrowed by dreams, and in this waking moment he could not separate the actual from the unreal. But as the fog burned away, the stern facts stood clear before his mental gaze, and he groaned aloud. John laid aside the book he had made a pretense of reading.

"Do you feel better, Jim?" he asked, as Blake struggled to his feet, and passed his hand wearily across his eyes.

"I think so," looking doubtfully at John. "I've been making an ass of myself. That's not a difficult task. Did I say or do anything out of the way?"

"Nothing except to keep me waiting several hours for my dinner," replied John. There was no

shade of annoyance or suspicion in his manner, and Blake felt a mingled sensation of relief and remorse. Humbled and nerveless he had an impulse to confess all and plead for John's forgiveness, but he lacked the strength of purpose.

"Take a cold plunge, and while you are dressing I'll order dinner," suggested John.

"I beg pardon for this foolishness!" exclaimed Blake looking ruefully first at John and then at the decanter. "As you know, I'm not given to drinking. I felt very bad this morning and took some brandy on an empty stomach. It went to my head, and that fool valet of mine didn't know enough to throw the cursed stuff out of the window. I've no recollection of what I did after the first drink. Are you sure I said nothing to offend you, John?"

"You have said nothing to offend me since that day we had the fight near the creek in old Rocky Woods," returned John, looking Blake frankly in the face. The latter's eyes dropped in confusion.

"We'll say no more about it," added John. "Take your bath, and by the time you are ready, I will see that Roberts has dinner served."

During and after the meal John led the conversation back over the years they had spent together. Blake was strangely silent. As a rule he took the lead over his quiet companion on such occasions, but this evening when he attempted to join in the conversation, something arose in his throat and choked him.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

HAWKINS MAKES A DISCOVERY

JOHN HAWKINS strode into the office of James Blake & Company at an early hour the following Monday morning, and after greeting the nominal head of the firm was shown to John Burt's room.

"Mighty glad to see you, my boy," his deep voice rumbled as he laid a giant palm on the shoulder of the younger man. "Don't think I'd have known you had I met you on the street. When did you part with the beard and moustache? It improves your looks, Burton. You stack up like a four time winner!"

"I'm feeling first-rate. And how are you, Hawkins?"

"Never was better. If I felt finer I'd have to take medicine for it."

He laughed with a roar that made the windows rattle, and then extracted an enormous black cigar from a case and filled the room with clouds of fragrant smoke. The tawny beard was perhaps a shade more grizzled than when John Burt first met him, but the years had not softened the lines of his figure nor bowed the massive shoulders. They talked for several minutes on commonplace topics. Mr. Hawkins studied the face of the younger with a scrutiny which did not escape John Burt.

"In your new disguise—or lack of disguise—you strangely remind me of some one," said Mr.

Hawkins suddenly. "I've been sitting here trying to recall who'n the devil it is. You told me once, as I remember, that you were born in Massachusetts, didn't you?"

"I did," replied John, "and I also told you that Burton was not my right name. Now, I'm going to tell you who I am, though you must guard my secret for a while yet—a short while, I hope."

"'John Burton' is good enough for me," asserted the magnate, grimly. "It don't make any difference whether your name is Smith, Jones or Schwartzmeister; I know you're all right, and I'll bet a million on it. Don't tell me, my boy, if you run any risk by doing so."

"There is no reason why I should not tell you," said John, after a moment's pause. "If any pretext ever existed why I should live under an alias, it has passed now. Here's an advertisement I recently ran across in a San Francisco paper. Read it."

John Hawkins adjusted his glasses and read the following:

> **To John Burt, of Hingham, Mass.**—All rewards offered for your arrest by Randolph or Arthur Morris are hereby withdrawn, and you are exempt from prosecution at our hands.
>
> (Signed) RANDOLPH MORRIS,
> ARTHUR MORRIS.

John Hawkins read it slowly, and looked searchingly into the face of the young man.

"So your name's Burt? Ever have a relation by the name of Peter Burt?"

"My grandfather's name is Peter Burt," replied John.

"Living yet, eh? How old is he?"

"Nearly ninety. You don't mean to tell me that you know him?"

"Was he a whaling captain?"

"He was captain and part owner of the whaler 'Segregansett,'" answered John.

Hawkins vented his surprise in strange exclamations, and John Burt was silent, in puzzled amazement. A frown spread across the older man's features, but the stern mouth relaxed into a smile, which was succeeded by a hurricane of laughter.

"John Burt, grandson to old Captain Pete Burt! This is too rich! My boy, there's a feud between the houses of Burt and Hawkins, but it shall not extend to your generation. We'll bury it right now! This is Greek to you, but I'll clear it up. Did the old man ever mention the name of Jack Hawkins to you?"

"Never."

"I suppose not. It isn't likely he would," and again Mr. Hawkins seemed vastly amused. "Well, I was his first mate on the Segregansett. Cap. Burt was nearly sixty years old then, and I was about twenty-six. I stood six feet four in my stockings, and, without a pound of fat, weighed about two hundred and forty. There was an idea abroad that

no man who trod a deck beneath an American flag could lick Jack Hawkins, and, barring one man, I guess they had the facts sized up about right. Your grandfather was perhaps an inch shorter than I. Every one knew that he was a tough old chap, but I was a youngster and not afraid of my weight in hungry wildcats, and it never occurred to me that he would stand a show with me in a fight. Do you see that scar?"

He ran his fingers through the iron-gray locks and pushed them back from his forehead. There showed a livid mark, with four black circles.

"Those round black marks are the prints of your dear old grandfather's knuckles," he said, letting the hair drop back into place. "They've been there thirty odd years. I'll tell you how it happened. Captain Burt was a very religious man, according to his own standards. He went through the decalogue and marked off some of the commandments, and had the others printed in large letters. He was dead set against swearing, but broadminded in his views on murder. He wouldn't tackle a sperm whale if he blowed on Sunday, but when he went ashore, after a long cruise, the way he smashed some of the last commandments was a caution. But as I said, he was particularly down on swearing. A cuss word drove him crazy, and I've seen him pound a man nearly to death for a harmless 'damn.' It got so that the men would detail one of their number to keep watch on the old man,

while the others cussed softly in their bunks. Sailors have a hard life, and swearing is one of their few luxuries."

"We had a sailor named Bilson," continued Mr. Hawkins. "He was one of those clumsy, aggravating fools whose very looks were an incentive to profanity. It came on to blow one night and I sent Bilson aloft. He managed to foul the fore-royal clew lines, and when I yelled at him he laughed in his idiotic way, and I was boiling mad all over. I said some things to him that wouldn't go in print. While I was relieving my mind I felt a hand on my shoulder, and it wasn't a gentle one, either.

"'Not another word from your blasphemous mouth, Jack Hawkins!' said Captain Burt.

"'You go to hell!' I said, so mad I didn't know what I was saying.

"He gave me a cuff on the side of the head with the palm of his hand. It was not heavy, but it made me crazy.

"'Go below and pray God to forgive you,' he said.

"No man had ever struck me before, and I swung at him with my right. I caught him a glancing blow above the eye. He didn't even raise his hands.

"'Hit me again, Jack Hawkins!' he said, calm as if asking me to pass him the salt.

"I aimed for his chin, but caught him on the

neck. It was like striking a brick wall. I saw his eyes gleam, but he said nothing. His arm smashed through my guard, and his fist landed full on my temple. It was a frightful blow, and I went sprawling to the deck. Before I could make a struggle he picked me up and hurled me over the rail. As I came up I caught one glimpse of the Segregansett through the mist, as she heeled to port in the gale.

"The water revived me, and I succeeded in kicking off my boots. I swam in the direction of the ship, and by sheer good luck bumped into a hencoop, which some one—Captain Burt most likely—had thrown overboard. I floated around on that hencoop until morning.

"It was still heavy weather, with no sign of the ship. Along about noon I heard a splashing, and a big canoe filled with natives came in sight. I yelled at them, and after much palaver they took me in. I was pretty well fagged out. They were friendly savages on a visit from one small island to another. I went along as a guest, and it was months before the boats of the 'Jane M' came ashore and took me off.

"A year later I landed in 'Frisco, just in time to be in the gold excitement. That's all. If your grandfather hadn't thrown me overboard in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, it's not likely I'd have located the Challenge mine. I forgave him years ago, and you can bet I harbor no grudge against his grandson."

"He has been the one to suffer," said John. "He imagines himself your murderer, and for years has prayed for forgiveness. I remember as a little child listening to his petitions to the Almighty for 'having taken from a fellow creature that breath of life which Thou gavest.' I expect to go back to him in a few days, and you must go with me. I promised when I fled from Rocky Woods, that I would not communicate with him or any one I knew until I could meet my enemies as an equal. That time has come, I believe," added John with a quiet smile.

Then he told John Hawkins the story of his boyhood and of the shooting of Arthur Morris. He told of his love for Jessie Carden, and of his determination to restore to General Carden the fortune filched from him by the elder Morris.

"When last I saw Miss Carden," said John, "she was the heiress to a comfortable fortune. I had nothing but health, strength, and ambition, but she believed in my future, and something has told me that she would wait for me. In these long years my confidence has wavered only for the instant when Blake brought news that she was engaged to Morris. I shall see her in a few days, and I wish her to be as proud and independent of my wealth as on that night I left her side, five years ago. In the old days I imagined myself handicapped by poverty; now I dread the weight of success. She has been robbed of her birthright, but if my judgment

of the value of L. & O. is accurate, it will be restored to the keeping of her father."

"I have news for you about L. & O.," said John Hawkins, "but first tell me exactly how you stand. How much do you lack of control?"

"How many shares have you?" asked John.

"Seventy-four hundred and sixty."

John consulted a detailed statement of his purchases.

"The company is organized with one hundred thousand shares, of a par value of one hundred dollars each," he said, "with bonds to the amount of five millions more. Morris holds thirty-five thousand shares, and his associates twelve thousand. That is three thousand less than control, but he imagines that General Carden cannot exercise his option on ten thousand shares. These he expects will fall into his hands when the market price drops below twenty-six. As I wrote you, I've had Blake acquire this option from General Carden, but of course Morris knows nothing of this. By private purchase and in the open market, our agents have picked up twenty-nine thousand shares."

"Let's see," mused John Hawkins. "I have 7,460, you have 29,000 and an option on Carden's 10,000. That makes a total of 46,460 shares. You yet lack 3,541 of control. Go into the market and buy 'em, my boy! You've done a great piece of work; a bigger one than you realize."

"Now let me tell you something," continued Hawkins, after pacing up and down the room, "though you probably know most of it already. Morris owns nearly all of the bonds. For years old Randolph Morris has been scheming to wreck the road and so come into possession of it on his bonds. As a final step, his directors propose an assessment of the stock. Since we now control, or will before the day closes, we need not fear this move. He had arranged to turn this wrecked property over to C. M. & C. C., for a consideration of eighteen million dollars. No wonder the L. & O. bonds are not for sale. It's the most reckless piece of railway murder ever attempted, but this young fool, Morris, has ruined the plans so carefully laid by his old villain of a father. He has staked everything on the assumption that General Carden cannot exercise his option. What amount did Morris advance to Carden?"

"Less than $300,000."

"H-m-m-m. What an ass! Why didn't he give Carden what the stock was worth, take it up, and then go on with his sheep-killing?" Hawkins looked his disgust.

"Listen to me, Burton—I beg your pardon, my boy—Mr. Burt," and the room again resounded with his laugh. "As I was about to say, I've been looking into this L. & O. property. It's all right, and, as president of the International Central, I'm going to buy it if I can make reasonable terms with

you. The L. & O. gives us needed terminals in three large cities. It would be fatal to our interests to let it fall into the hands of the C. M. & C. C. If it's worth eighteen millions to them, it's worth a few millions more to us. I've talked with Renshaw, and he's with us. He's willing to pay twenty, or even twenty-two millions for the L. & O. Figuring the bonds at their fair value, twenty millions would make that stock worth $150.00 a share."

"That's the way I figure it," assented John Burt.

"Has Morris sold the stock short?"

"I should judge that he is short 50,000 or 60,000 shares. I have gone long on at least 45,000 of this amount, at an average price of 28½."

"You've got him all right," roared Hawkins, grasping John Burt's hand. "I'm proud of you, my boy! I came on to help you out, and now I find that you have turned the trick without me. Unless an earthquake destroys New York in a week, you'll have the Morris millions, and your sweetheart's military parent can count his fortune in seven figures. Is there anything more you want?"

"Yes," returned John.

"Well, you'll get her. I'll back your grandad's judgment that she is waiting for you. Speaking of Peter Burt, how old did you say he is?"

"Nearly ninety."

"And you wish me to see him. Think I'll wait until he's a hundred," declared John Hawkins.

"Joking aside, I'll go with you any day you say, and I'll be damned glad to meet the old man. Only I'll promise not to swear again in his presence."

They talked for hours, and Hawkins listened with interest to the disclosures made by Sam Rounds concerning the Cosmopolitan Improvement Company. The ticker showed that the stock was strong and buoyant, in anticipation of favorable aldermanic action on the following evening.

A messenger arrived with a sealed letter from the alderman, informing John Burt that the bribery money had been paid over or deposited. With the seven aldermen supposed to be purchased, Morris estimated a majority of four in favor of his new franchises. The conservative papers denounced the proposed enactments as a steal, and called on reputable aldermen to go on record against them, but refrained from naming the wealthy beneficiaries of this public crime.

During the day John Burt contracted to make future delivery of large blocks of Cosmopolitan. In the parlance of Wall Street this was "going short." In other words, he believed that this stock was selling for more than it was worth. The defeat of the ordinances would enhance the value of the stock of the rival company, and John Burt bought it.

Morris was so sure of speculative success that he had fixed the dinner party to General Carden, Jessie, Edith and Blake for Tuesday evening—the

date of the council session when his ordinances would come up for final action. The news of his triumph should come to him while he was reveling in the charm of Jessie Carden's presence. The contemplation of this pleasure inspired Morris with a new idea.

The dinner should celebrate his formal engagement to Jessie Carden! The more he pondered over this brilliant coup the more entrancing did it seem. He construed Jessie's acceptance of Blake's invitation to the theatre as part of a pretty plot to pique his jealousy. Had she not told him that she would not marry until two years had passed? He consulted his note book, and smiled when he found that the weeks of his probation were ended. He had been a laggard but would wait no longer. The fair Jessie had employed a justifiable expedient to spur him to action.

His carriage drew up at the Bishop residence an hour before the time set for the dinner. He waited with impatience for Jessie, and was effusive in his greeting when she entered the drawing-room.

"You are more than prompt, Mr. Morris," she said, releasing her hand.

"I have something to say to you, to ask you, Jessie. Are we likely to be disturbed here?"

"I think not. What weighty secret have you to disclose, Mr. Morris? I warn you that I do not speculate or take the slightest interest in the stock market. Pray be seated."

The great house was silent, and the yellow light of the setting sun flooded the room. Jessie was superb as she calmly awaited the declaration her intuition told her was forthcoming. She could not find in her heart the slightest feeling of pity or sympathy for Arthur Morris. By nature loving and tender, this man aroused in her naught but bitter resentment.

"I have waited years for this moment," he said, dramatically. His face paled slightly, but he was not abashed. "From the hour I saw you in Hingham I have admired you, and now I ask you to be my wife. I am a man of vast affairs, a successful business man, as you are aware. I—I am not up in matters of this kind,—but—but—will you be mine? As you know, I think a great deal of you; more than I know how to tell you! The governor—dear old governor!—endorses my choice. Say you will have me, Jessie! We will be married at once."

He had forgotten the peroration of his carefully prepared and oft-rehearsed proposal, and concluded by dropping clumsily to his knees. There was more of demand than of pleading in his manner. It was the confident request of the creditor, who seeks final payment on a long overdue debt.

Jessie Carden's eyes flashed as she looked down upon him.

"Arise, Mr. Morris, and make an end to this scene!" she said, as she instinctively drew away

from him. "I cannot marry you. You must respect this answer as final."

Her voice was low, but firm, and the dark eyes held no gleam of hope. For an instant an almost ridiculous expression of dismayed surprise came to his face, and then it was mottled with an anger which swept away the slight trace of tenderness. Morris struggled to his feet.

"You told me to wait two years for you, and I have waited!" he exclaimed, harshly. "This is a strange reward for my patience and for my kindness to your father!"

"I told you I would not marry within two years. I have kept my word. I made no other promise. I shall not discuss your business relations with General Carden. You certainly have not considered me a part of them. Since our dinner engagement promises no pleasure to either of us, I will release you from it. Pray excuse me. General Carden will be with you presently."

"Don't go, I beg of you!" pleaded Morris, as Jessie turned to leave the room. "Your absence from the dinner would—well, it would be very embarrassing, don't you see? I won't say anything more about—about marriage, but please go with us. Something may happen which you would like to hear about. You will go; won't you—Miss Carden?"

Jessie yielded to this miserable entreaty, and a moment later General Carden entered the room

and relieved an awkward situation. Jessie took small part in the conversation as the carriage rolled down the avenue, but Morris chatted gaily with Edith Hancock. He secretly nursed his anger, but Jessie noticed that he studiously ignored General Carden.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

SAM ROUNDS REPENTS

COSMOPOLITAN Improvement stock was strong and active during the session preceding the evening set for the special consideration of its franchises. Brokers who acted for Arthur Morris stood on the floor of the exchange and bid up the stock and took all offerings. The price mounted steadily, but rapidly. There was heavy selling from some unknown source, and at the close enormous blocks came out.

The rumor spread that James Blake was selling the stock. When his representatives stood in the excited mob and boldly proffered Cosmopolitan in thousand-share lots, the price sagged, but Morris's agents came to the rescue and it closed just below the top figure.

A published poll of the council showed a majority in favor of the ordinances, and wise speculators predicted that in the expected boom of the morrow Blake would be severely punished. Blake denied himself to all callers. The office force buzzed with gossip, hanging on the fact that John Burton had taken direct control of the Cosmopolitan deal. Occasionally Blake was called into his office, but when he emerged he issued no orders. The transactions were recorded in the name of John Hawkins, and that gentleman spent all of his time with "Mr. Burton."

Early in the day John sent for Blake.

"Mr. Hawkins and I have arranged to attend to-night's session of the council," said John. "Will you join us, Jim?"

"I'd like to, but I have another engagement," replied Blake. "I'll try to drop in before the session is over." He called John aside so that Mr. Hawkins would not overhear him.

"Arthur Morris is likely to be there. Are you not afraid he will recognize you?"

"I am not attempting to avoid Morris, but I doubt if he will be present," was John's reply. As Blake left the room he felt that the searching eyes of John Hawkins were upon him.

"What's the matter with Blake?" demanded Hawkins abruptly, when the door had closed. "He acts like a cat who has swallowed a canary, or who intended to. He's not the same Blake I knew in California. What's up with him?"

"He's in trouble."

"What about?"

"He hasn't told me," replied John Burt in a tone which said that further questioning was useless.

"U-m-m-m. It's none of my business, perhaps, but I'd find out if I were you," with which remark Hawkins pulled vigorously at his cigar and became absorbed in an evening paper.

Long before the chairman called the city fathers to order, the hall was cloudy with tobacco smoke. There was little that was impressive in the personnel

of the municipal Solons, nor was their gathering marked by dignity. It is a sad reflection that the average city council is fairly representative of its constituents. It is the mirror of urban ignorance, deceit and cupidity; of the varying grades of venality, relieved by a sprinkling of upright, but too often impractical men. Righteous enactments are wrung from such bodies only by fear of public indignation, and corrupt measures go down to defeat only when detection and punishment faces the purchasable majority.

John Burt and John Hawkins looked down on this motley crowd of civic statesmanship.

There were fat aldermen, with rotund stomachs and double chins; slim aldermen, whose cadaverous faces were alert lest some steal should be consummated without their participation; pompous aldermen, whose measured words and strutting mien served instead of mentality; modest aldermen, whose retiring ways and furtive glances raised the suspicion that they had stolen quietly into political honor by some strange mistake; solemn aldermen, awed by the weight of their responsibilities, and who gesticulated with poised forefingers; jocose aldermen, who regarded the assembly as a club, and themselves as the merrymakers; saloon-keeping aldermen, garish in solitaires, who shook hands as if about to draw glasses of beer; ultra respectable aldermen from the suburban wards, whose trimmed beards were suggestive of landscape gardening; exquisite aldermen,

slovenly aldermen, placid aldermen, nervous aldermen—these and other types represented the elective majesty of the American metropolis.

Within the rail which held back the populace were others than aldermen. Newspaper men greeted the legislators by their first names; artists sketched them in characteristic poses. Former aldermen in retirement by the negative votes of their wards, now serving as lobbyists, plied their trade with small attempt at secrecy. Policemen, sergeants-at-arms, and distinguished visitors from other cities, hurried about the halls. Titled foreigners studying American institutions were honored with seats on the platform. Messenger boys and a delegation of school teachers armed with a petition for an increase in salaries hung about. All came to a semblance of order when the presiding officer hammered his desk with a gavel and the secretary droned the roll-call.

Various minor matters had been debated and decided when the chairman announced that the hour set for the consideration of the franchises of the Cosmopolitan Improvement Company had arrived. A clerk read the ordinances, and each alderman was provided with a copy of them.

Alderman Hendricks arose and was recognized. He was the accredited champion of the Cosmopolitan franchises. By profession he was a lawyer—by occupation the municipal representative of such corporations as could command his services. He made an able presentation of the argu-

ments in favor of the pending ordinances. He was empowered by his constituents to vote in their favor, he said. They promised a much-needed relief from the exactions of a grinding monopoly. Their sponsors were wealthy, reputable citizens whose words were as good as their bonds. There could be no intelligent, unselfish opposition to these measures, and so on to an eloquent peroration. It was a good speech, and worth all that was paid for it.

Others followed in a similar strain, though not so logically or grammatically. The language of the Bowery vied with the classic diction of the universities in expounding the claims and merits of Cosmopolitan. A well-drilled claque in the gallery applauded at proper intervals.

Alderman Jones was recognized. He was opposed to the ordinances, and denounced them as a sand-bagging measure, introduced for vicious purposes. They offered no relief, and no honest man could vote for them. Alderman Jones insinuated that money had been used to secure their passage. Since he was known to be an incorrigible reformer, no attempt had been made to bribe him, and the Cosmopolitan aldermen laughed at his charges.

Other speeches were made, for and against the ordinances, and then Alderman Hendricks moved the previous question. It was carried, and the roll-call ordered. The clerk, pencil in hand, began his monotonous task.

"First Ward—Alderman Patrick?"

"A-aye, sor!" yelled a shrill voice.

The claque applauded vigorously.

"Alderman Saboski?"

"Aye," sounded a clear tenor.

The gallery was again liberal in its approbation.

"Second Ward—Alderman Hendricks?"

"Aye," said the great lawyer, without raising his eyes from a document. It was a confident, assertive, matter-of-fact "aye," as if its recording were a mere formality.

"Alderman Rounds?" called the clerk.

A tall, awkward man rose and faced the chairman. His red hair was plastered over his forehead, and his hands seemed in the way. In one of them he held a package, and in the other some loose papers. He raised his eyes to the gallery and they twinkled as they rested for a moment on John Burt.

"Mr. President, I desire to explain my vote on these ordinances."

There was nothing awkward in the voice. It was clear, firm, and had that ring of honesty which commands the attention of hearers.

"The honorable alderman from the Second Ward desires to explain his vote," said the presiding officer. "If there is no objection he will proceed."

There was no objection. The Cosmopolitan partisans believed that Alderman Rounds had been

won over to their side, and were willing he should attempt to explain the reasons for his change of heart. He had played a waiting game, and it was no secret to those on the inside that Arthur Morris had been compelled to pay liberally for the allegiance of Samuel L. Rounds. And they admired Rounds for it. The small thief looks up to the big thief, and in municipal circles the official who can "hold up" a great corporation and make it "stand and deliver" is awarded a full measure of respect from those whose peculations are conducted more timorously.

"Mr. Chairman," began Alderman Rounds, placing his papers on the desk, and with his hands plunged in his pockets, "two years ago, when the original Cosmopolitan ordinances came up for passage, I voted an' spoke against them. I was opposed to them an' said so. When these bills were proposed I made a careful study of them. At first I was not in favor of them, but certain gentlemen presented the subject to me in a new light, an' I agreed to vote for the passage of the ordinances now under consideration."

The Cosmopolitan aldermen joined the claque in the applause which followed this declaration.

"Mr. Chairman," continued Sam Rounds, assuming an easy attitude in the aisle, "I don't suppose there's any one in this honorable body likes money better'n I do. As far back as I can trace, no one in the Rounds family ever had much money,

and it looks like I had inherited all the thirst for money which comes from a drought in the Rounds family extending two hundred years back an' more. When I began to make money tradin' in hosses back in Massachusetts, it was like pourin' kerosene oil on a red-hot stove. The more I got the more I wanted, an' as some of you know I've done pretty fairly middlin' well."

Sam Rounds reached out and picked a small package from the table and looked at it longingly. Alderman Hendricks turned in his chair and gazed uneasily at the speaker. There was something in his manner which caused a hush to fall on the assembly.

"Mr. Chairman," said Alderman Rounds, slowly unwrapping the package as he continued, "money is the greatest argument in the world. Logic is a fine thing, but money beats logic. I admire the man who has the gift of eloquence, like my honorable colleague from my ward, but money can give eloquence a handicap an' beat it every time. Money talks with a tongue of silver an' lips of gold. It whispers sweet words to our willin' ears, an' we answer yes or no under the spell of its musical notes. Money—"

"Mr. Chairman," interrupted Alderman Hendricks, "we desire to proceed with this vote—much as we are charmed by my colleague's trite reflections about money as an abstract proposition. The question before the Board is the disposition of these

ordinances. I demand that the alderman record his vote."

"Alderman Rounds has the floor," decided the chairman.

"Thank you, I'll not take up much of your time," said Sam Rounds. "As I was sayin', I'm uncommonly fond of money, an' when the President of the Cosmopolitan Improvement Company came to my place of business an' said he would pay me ten thousand dollars for my vote in favor of these ordinances, I just went plumb off my center, an' told him I would consider it. I couldn't see anything else in the world but that figure 'one' with four ciphers after it, an' a dollar mark in front of it. Mr. Chairman, you never had to work hard or trade for a livin', an' you can't realize how I felt when he placed this here package in my hand."

Sam tore away the wrapping and disclosed a layer of crisp banknotes. Every eye in the room was fixed on the speaker as he stepped forward and laid them on the chairman's table. Dazed and demoralized, no member of the opposition dared interrupt.

"When I made my start tradin' hosses I was tickled to death if I sold a hoss an' made twenty dollars profit. That ten thousand dollars meant the sellin' of more than five hundred hosses, an' all I had to do was reach out an' take it. In my produce an' commission business, competition is so sharp that I'm lucky to quit two cents ahead on a bushel

of potatoes, an' there in a lump was more money than I could make on half a million bushel of potatoes—an' I want to tell you that that's an awful lot of potatoes—enough to last this town a long while. An' I gazed at that money an' thought how it would look in my bank book, an' I said to him, 'Mr. Morris,' says I, 'I'm your man.' An' then seein' how easy it was to make money here in this city council, I made a deal with him by which I was to buy up six other aldermen an' turn 'em over to him, same as if they was a lot of hosses or bags of potatoes. I talked with these aldermen, Mr. Chairman, an' all of them accepted what I offered them. Then we drew up an agreement to vote for the ordinances an' gave it to Mr. Morris. Here, Mr. Chairman, is the duly certified copy of that contract. Part of the money was in cash an' the rest in a certified check which was deposited in the hands of a disinterested party. That party has kindly loaned me this check, an' I have brought it here for your inspection. You will note that it is signed by Mr. Arthur Morris and drawn on his bank.

"Now, Mr. Chairman, an' members of this honorable body," said Sam, turning and facing his astonished listeners, "I want to say to you that I have changed my mind about voting for these ordinances. My lawyer tells me I don't have to keep this agreement with Mr. Morris, an' I'm goin' to sacrifice that ten thousand dollars an' the ten thousand more which would have been mine when these

ordinances pass. I talked it all over with my old mother—an' she likes money a'most as bad as I do —an' we agreed it wan't the proper thing to do. I told the people down in my ward when they elected me, that I would be as square with them here in this council as I was in my store, an' I take it that I'm here only because they can't be here. I speak an' act for them, but all of us are partners in matters affecting the welfare of the city. I wouldn't cheat a partner in business, an' I won't cheat my partners as citizens. Mr. Morris says he isn't attempting to bribe me, an' I'm willing to take his word for it that it was purely a business proposition. He didn't say anything to me about keeping it a secret, so I've told you all I know about it. It occurs to me that if these franchises are so valuable that those seeking them are willing to pay money for them, that they should pay it into the city treasury so it may be expended for parks, schools, streets, an' other improvements in which all the taxpayers can share. Of course I may be wrong, but that's the way it looks to me, Mr. Chairman. Acting on the advice of my lawyer, I therefore turns this money over to you, with the certified check an' the agreement we signed. All of the aldermen who signed it have changed their minds, as they probably will tell you. Thankin' you for your kind attention to this explanation, I votes 'no'."

A scene of wildest confusion followed. Half of the members were on their feet demanding

recognition. The chairman pounded his gavel into slivers in a vain attempt to restore order. Sam Rounds was surrounded by reporters who demanded details, but he declined to add a word to his public statement. The storm gradually subsided, and Alderman Hendricks secured recognition from the chair.

"In view of the remarkable statements made by my colleague," he said, "I move a postponement of the vote, and the appointment of a committee to investigate these curious charges."

There were vigorous protests, and the chair ruled that the vote must proceed. Each of the six aldermen associated with Sam Rounds substantiated the charges made, and deposited the bribery money with the chairman. Realizing that defeat was inevitable, all of the ringsters excepting Alderman Hendricks recorded their votes against the ordinances. A motion to adjourn was declared passed, and the excited mob poured into the corridors.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

THE LOVE OF A MAN FOR A WOMAN

IT was not the fault of the chef or of the service that Arthur Morris did not enjoy his dinner.

Jessie's beauty, which once charmed him, now inspired him with jealous rage. For Blake he felt unalloyed hatred, and for General Carden a contempt which he did not try to conceal. The cheerfulness which he had assumed when Jessie rejected his suit, gave way to sullen reticence. On the ashes of his passion he kindled the fires of revenge. He impatiently awaited the morrow, when he hoped to crush James Blake and to extinguish the general. He prayed that the news of the council's decision might be brought to him at dinner.

Morris knew that the firm of James Blake & Company had sold large amounts of Cosmopolitan stock. His agents had traced to the same source extensive purchases of L. & O. He glanced at Blake and then at Jessie, and a bitter smile came to his lips.

"I will make this a famous marriage," he thought. "I'll strip this cad Blake of his last dollar before he can fix a wedding-day with this penniless daughter of a doddering old bankrupt! I'll shear him so close that they'll be glad to spend the honeymoon in a hall bedroom of a tenement flat on the East Side. I've got him at last where I want him. And old Carden knows what's coming to him. He shall walk the streets to-morrow! Ruin—absolute,

hopeless ruin—will be served out to the whole threadbare rabble to-morrow! The marriage of Miss Jessie Bankrupt to Mr. James Failure!" and he grinned in his hatred.

"Let us share your amusement," said Blake, who had been watching Morris closely. He had not failed to notice the coldness between his rival and Jessie Carden, and felt reasonably certain of the truth. "Why this suppressed merriment, Morris? Let us in on your secret hilarity."

"Excuse my absent-mindedness," returned Morris, after a moment's reflection, "but I was smiling to think of Cosmopolitan and the scene on Wall Street to-morrow. Cosmopolitan is a stock, Miss Carden, and I know you are not interested in anything so vulgar as stocks or money, but to-morrow its fate will grip the world like the death of a king. But Blake is interested, and your father used to be. They say, by the way, Blake, that you're short on Cosmopolitan? Hope not, old chap! It's a deuced bad time, don't you know, to make that sort of a play, my dear fellow."

"Oh, I'm all right, Morris, thanks, I haven't sold a share," replied Blake, cheerfully. "Some of my customers may have done so, but I've paid no attention to it. I've been loading up on L. & O., as you advised."

"Glad to hear it," returned Morris, who believed the latter half of Blake's statement, and set the first down as a conventional Wall Street false-

hood. "The council will pass the ordinances tonight. I'm expecting word from there any minute."

As he spoke a messenger boy approached and handed Morris an envelope.

"Ah! I presume this is it!" he exclaimed. He adjusted his monocle with elaborate care, broke the envelope and read:

> My Dear Morris: The Cosmopolitan franchises were defeated by a practically unanimous vote. Rounds and six others charge you with bribery. Rounds exhibited your certified check. Am on my way to the Hoffman House. Meet me there at once. Destroy this. H.

The note fell from the speculator's hand and fluttered to the floor. He stared wildly around, but no words came to his lips.

"Any answer, boss?" The piping voice of the messenger boy, as he stood, cap in hand, recalled him to earth.

"No," he said, pushing his chair from the table and rising unsteadily to his feet. "I'm going. Good-night!"

"Forty-five cents, boss," demanded the messenger.

"Get out of the way, damn you! Pay this boy, Blake!" and he rushed for the dressing-room.

Blake picked up the note and tore it into pieces. He knew the purport of the message which had caused the precipitate departure of Arthur Morris, but he did not disclose it.

"Some important Wall Street matter, I suppose," he ventured, in answer to the questioning surprise of Jessie and Edith.

"His expression positively frightened me!" said Edith. "Did you notice how white he turned when he read that note? It must have been something awful! Perhaps his father is dead?"

Mr. Kingsley sauntered through the room, and, with a smile and a polite salutation, paused a moment to chat with his acquaintances.

"I passed Morris in the lobby," he said. "He's been dining with you, has he not? He looked like a ghost. You've heard the news, haven't you? No? I got it from young Rogers; and he's nearly as badly broke up as Morris. It's a beastly affair, and I'm glad I'm not in it. The aldermen met tonight and defeated the Cosmopolitan ordinances. Morris is heavily interested in them, and all that sort of thing, don't you know? But that's not all. An alderman, named Square or Block—Rounds?—knew it was some geometrical name—well, this fellow Rounds raised a blooming scandal—showed papers and checks and things, you know, and said that Morris had bribed him! Young Rogers tried to tell me about it. He was there and saw it, but it seems he's been speculating in this Cosmopolitan stock, and he's in such a purple funk, don't you know, that I couldn't make out half what he said. By Jove, it was a narrow escape for me! Morris wanted me to go in with him, but my

governor—wise old governor—wouldn't put up a dollar. Beastly business! Looks bad for Morris. Nice chap, Morris. Don't you think so, Blake? You are looking more charming than ever, Miss Hancock. I would that I could frame a compliment worthy of you, Miss Carden. Waiter, a glass, and, with your permission, I'll tarry in the place vacated by your absent host and drink your health and his success, in spite of this—this unfortunate incident."

The voluble Kingsley found the society of Miss Hancock so agreeable that his companions could not lure him from the table. General Carden was called to another part of the room, and James Blake welcomed the opportunity of a chat with Jessie.

The impending overthrow of Morris fed the flames of James Blake's impatience. According to the falsehood he had told John Burt, Jessie was due to arrive in New York in a few days. He saw a thousand chances for the exposure of his duplicity to one for its success. Only in Jessie's presence did his hopes surmount his fears. He invented innumerable wild schemes and dismissed them one by one. One chance remained—an immediate proposal, its unhesitating acceptance, and a hasty marriage. He would carry the citadel of her heart by storm, and bear her away in the confusion and turmoil of the coming battle.

"Women have been won in a day," he mused, "and by knights less well armed than myself. Why

should she not look with favor on my suit? I'm rich; they say I'm good-looking. Jessie will look upon me as her father's benefactor the moment Morris is slaughtered by the rise in L. & O. John is likely to spring that trap to-morrow. I'll propose to-morrow night! She must accept me—she will accept me. Then, an immediate marriage and a trip to Europe. Why should that not win? It's got to win; I'll make it win. Let's see; that gives me about six days. The Bible says the world was created in six days, and a strong man should be able to win a little woman in half the time."

Thus argued James Blake during a lull in the conversation. This was worthy of his reckless nature. He could not turn back. The smoke of burning bridges was behind him; the spoils of conquered love awaited his onward march.

"It seems impossible that I have known you only a week," he said, raising his eyes and looking tenderly into Jessie's face. "I feel as if I'd been acquainted with you for years, and not for a few brief days."

Millions of lovers have voiced the same discovery, and millions more will do it again.

"You are singularly forgetful," laughed Jessie, "of our early acquaintance in Rocky Woods. That was not weeks, but years ago."

"I must give Mr. Morris credit for that bit of imagination," said Blake. "It has become a reality to me, and I can see you as you were back in those

years, and picture you among the rocks and fields we knew so well. Do you go there this season, Miss Carden?"

"We leave on the Thursday evening boat," was the reply. Nothing could have suited Blake better. He would tell John Burt that Jessie had postponed her departure from France. He then would plead ill health and join Jessie in Hingham, and their marriage and wedding-trip should follow. The first card had fallen in his favor, and he determined to press his advantage.

"May I call to-morrow evening, and not plead business with the general as a pretext?" he asked boldly. "I may not have another chance to see you before you leave. You see I'm already presuming on these years of friendship."

"General Carden attends a banquet to-morrow evening, but Edith and I will be at home and we'll be delighted if you'll drop in to relieve the monotony," replied Jessie. "Uncle Tom plays a splendid hand at whist and you can take papa's place."

"One can't talk and play whist," observed Blake with a queer smile. "I've so many things I wish to say that I'd be willing and even glad to forego the pleasures of the game."

At that moment General Carden rejoined the little party, and as Jessie made no direct reply Blake construed her silence into consent. His spirits mounted high as hope fed the springs of his longing. The hour was late when he bade his fellow-

guests good night at the carriage door, and his being thrilled with the touch of her hand and the light of her smile at parting.

Blake strolled slowly up the avenue, in the direction of his apartments. He had not gone two squares when he met John Burt. In all the years in San Francisco and New York, this was the first time they had met in a public thoroughfare. One of the horses hauling a wagon laden with stage settings had fallen and blocked the street.

The Bishop carriage was caught in the eddy of traffic caused by the temporary dam across conflicting streams. A public hansom, furiously driven, almost crashed into the entangled vehicles, and the light from a street lamp showed the blotched face of Arthur Morris as he leaned far out to curse the driver.

Within a circle of a hundred feet were four of the figures in a drama which was culminating to a tragedy.

"Hello, Jim!" exclaimed John Burt. "I've been looking everywhere for you. Was just going to Sherry's. Have been to your rooms and left word with your man that I would be back. Hawkins is there waiting for us. Where can we get a carriage? I'm lost in this wilderness."

The fallen horse had struggled to his feet, and Blake saw the Bishop carriage thread its way through the crush and turn into a side street. Morris struck his horse a vicious blow with a cane, and

the animal dashed ahead. Blake concealed his confusion by looking up and down the street for a carriage. He finally hailed a driver, and they were rapidly driven to his apartments.

"We must perfect our plans for to-morrow," said John. "The critical hours are near and everything must move like clockwork. The city council defeated the Cosmopolitan franchises to-night, and I shall move against L. & O. to-morrow morning."

The voice was calm, but it held a note of triumph and of quiet confidence. It hinted at no suspicion, and Blake drew a long breath of relief as he thought of his third escape.

He shuddered to think of what would have happened had General Carden postponed his departure from the dining-room by a few minutes. He pictured John Burt entering the room, his steady gaze fixed first on himself and then on Jessie Carden. So vivid was the imaginary picture that he felt all the horror of the situation.

Little was said as they drove rapidly along the avenue. John seemed absorbed in thoughts of the morrow. The intermittent glare from street lamps and passing carriages lighted up his face and revealed his stalwart figure. The past unrolled its scroll before James Blake, and something blurred his eyes and surged to his throat. Passion for Jessie Carden had overthrown his judgment, dwarfed his reason, and made him recreant to a friendship which he had cherished above all things.

John Burt aroused from his reverie and threw his arm familiarly across Blake's shoulder.

"This is my last speculative campaign, Jim," he said. "For years I have been a gold-grubbing and money-making machine, and I hope my better instincts have survived the strain. We shall triumph to-morrow, and when it is ended you shall be, in fact as well as in name, the head of the firm of James Blake & Company. I can retire from active participation in its affairs as quietly as I entered, and you have fairly won whatever of prestige attaches to the name. You know, old man, that you can call on me for counsel, or, if necessary, for assistance, and I'm sure Hawkins will make the same pledge. We'll not discuss the matter to-night, but you must not argue with me or hurt my feelings by attempting to thank me. We are all more or less selfish, Jim, and you can put this down as pure selfishness on my part. Here we are!"

Before Blake could find words to reply, the carriage stopped in front of his apartment. They entered and found Hawkins awaiting them.

"I'm making myself at home, Blake," he said. "I've kept your man busy getting cigars and refreshments. I endorse your brandy, but your tobacco is not heavy enough for me. Let's get down to business, gentlemen. It's past midnight, and we'll need all the sleep we can get."

For nearly two hours they worked at the plans for the battle which was to come. At times Blake

was absorbed in the discussion, again his mind wandered to the woman he would buy at the price of his honor.

Then he thought of John Burt's princely pledge, and like a flash there came to him an impulse which thrilled his very soul with a happiness in which were throbs of poignant pain.

Not many blocks away another conference was in progress. Staid bank directors and financiers associated with Arthur Morris had been aroused from their slumbers and were assembled in his rooms. Bewildered for the moment by the unexpected blow, Morris took measures for defense with a vigor which was keyed by a sense of imminent danger. His suspicion that James Blake was the cause of his defeat became a certainty when a reporter informed him that Blake and Samuel L. Rounds were boyhood companions, and that the latter had been seen in Blake's offices.

How he had loathed Blake that night as Jessie Carden sat between them at the dinner! He had wished the food would choke him or the wine poison him. And now his imperilled millions shrieked in fear at the mention of the man's name. He cursed the day that took him to Hingham, and the hour when he saw the pretty face of Jessie Carden.

The east was crimsoned with sunlight before the conference ended. The weary men of money left Morris's rooms and sought a few hours of rest before facing the ordeal of the day. For mutual

protection they had formed a pool; had pledged themselves to support the market against the expected onslaught of Blake's millions.

They dreamed not that such a man as John Burt existed, or that his masked and entrenched millions were so arrayed as to strike a blow at an undefended place, and in an unexpected moment.

Why were these masked millions drawn up in battle array? Why were the accumulated fortunes of a lifetime about to be risked in a grim struggle for financial life or death? Why did men of vast affairs wait with drawn faces and bated breaths the hour when the clash of opposing fortunes should sound the signal for merciless conflict?

Because of a woman—a woman pure as an opening bud and gentle as the dew which kisses it.

Why had James Blake proved false to the man who unselfishly befriended him? Why had he sought to repay loyalty with perfidy?

Because of a woman—a woman whose loving heart was incapable of deceit.

Why had John Burt consecrated years of his life in stern preparation for the crisis then at hand? Why was he willing to risk everything in a single combat with the man who stood between him and his crowning ambition?

Because of a woman—because of Jessie Carden.

Because a whimsical fate had ordained that three men should meet and love the same woman, the eyes of the world were bent that day upon Wall

Street. Because of her innocent charms, the vast machinery of finance and speculation reached out and crushed some into bankruptcy, lifted others into opulence. When all was ended, the students of such phenomena sagely discussed the causes which precipitated so marked an upheaval. They cited scores of reasons—none surmised the truth.

No one knew that once upon a time a little girl in a blue sailor suit was leaning over the rail of a bridge, and that a boy drove by and recovered her hat from the water. Yet that had everything to do with the Wall Street excitement of the day.

None of the wise writers knew that a shot fired by a hunter caused a runaway and a rescue—yet that shot had more to do with the hurricane in Wall Street than all the reasons that wisdom ascribed.

None of the students of finance knew of the day when the "Standish" rose and fell to the slow heaving of the sea; of that hot August afternoon when a boy of Rocky Woods laid his heart and his life at the disposition of a soft-eyed girl. None of them knew of an interview in the night shadows under the old maples, when two soft arms were thrown about John Burt's neck and a cheek wet with tears rested for an instant against his.

There is no such thing as accurate history, but if one were written, it would be recorded that events, dynasties and epochs have been created either by the love of a man for a woman, or by the devotion of a woman for a man.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

EDITH'S CONFESSION

"THE papers say Mr. Morris will be arrested! It's awful, Jessie! Look at the big headlines! I don't understand half they say, but it seems that Mr. Morris and Mr. Blake are rivals on Wall Street, and that Mr. Morris has fallen into a trap set by Mr. Blake. Oh, Jessie, think of it, that we dined with both of them last night, and they seemed as friendly and polite as if they were bosom friends! Isn't it awful?"

Edith Hancock's cheeks were reddened with excitement as she dashed into her cousin's room. They formed a dainty picture of maidenly health and grace, these two, as they scanned the lines before them.

"Mr. Blake was here while the general was at breakfast," she gabbled on, breathlessly. "They talked a minute and then he hurried away. Your father put some papers in his pocket and started down town at once. Do you suppose they will fight, Jessie?"

"Who? Papa and Mr. Blake?"

"No, Miss Stupid; Mr. Blake and Mr. Morris."

Edith pouted her pretty lips and gently cuffed Jessie's cheek.

"We needn't hope for anything so romantic," returned that untroubled maiden, laying the papers aside and deftly fastening an ornament in her dark

tresses. "Wouldn't Mr. Morris make a heroic figure in a duel? No, Edith, there's no field of honor nowadays—only Wall Street. I've no doubt Arthur Morris would rather lose blood than money. Oh, I hope Mr. Blake will despoil him of the millions he has taken from others. Think of the misery his fortune has cost! It ruined my father—and he dared to sneer at me last night. Edith, it's God's vengeance—not Mr. Blake's."

"Jessie, why was he such a brute with you last night?" Edith glanced at Jessie out of the corners of her wide-opened eyes.

"Can't you guess?"

"Did you refuse him? Honest?—no joking. Oh, I'm so glad! Do you know, Jessie, I was awfully afraid you intended to accept him?"

"I should be very sorry if he had been honest, but he's a cad and a thief," declared Jessie, her dark eyes flashing scorn. "Thank heaven, he is powerless to do us harm now. Did you notice how happy papa was last night? I made him tell me his secret. Listen, Edith! It is possible that Mr. Blake will be able to restore to papa a large share of his fortune. There's a chance that we may again live in the dear old Boston home. Isn't it splendid, Edith?"

"Splendid! It's more than splendid—it's heavenly!" exclaimed Edith. "Isn't Mr. Blake lovely? And he's so big and handsome, and generous, and good-looking, and manly, and—and

everything. I just love him, Jessie, don't you?" She looked closely at Jessie Carden.

"I—I like him, Edith. It wouldn't do for both of us to love him, would it, cousin mine?"

"He loves you," protested Edith, with a blush. "I know he does. He never takes his eyes from you. I watched him last evening. Are you sure you don't love him, Jessie, just a little bit?"

"Quite sure," laughed Jessie, as the roses came to her cheeks. "I can only love one man at a time —it's conventional, but it's true."

"You still love John Burt?" The big eyes opened wide as Edith looked questioningly at her cousin. "What a foolish little sweetheart you are, wasting your life on a man you haven't heard from for years! You were a child then; you're a woman now. You're jesting, Jessie; don't reject Mr. Blake."

"It's not likely I shall have a chance," said Jessie. The little face had grown very serious. "I sincerely hope not, Edith. John Burt is *not* dead, and he has *not* forgotten me. He will return, and, rich or poor, my faith is in him. Do you know, Edith, just before our carriage was blocked last night I saw a man walking down the avenue, in the full glare of a street lamp. I could have sworn it was John Burt. Do you remember I clutched your arm and pointed out of the window? I know he'll come back, and when he does he'll find me true."

"It might have been his ghost," said Edith.

"If so, it was a remarkably active ghost," laughed Jessie. "He was walking rapidly, with his shoulders thrown back, and when I saw his face I could hardly keep from calling his name at the top of my voice. Wasn't it odd, Edith?"

"But, Jessie, if John Burt's in the city why doesn't he come to see you?"

"He may not know that I'm here," returned Jessie quickly. "He may have just learned that Arthur Morris is not dead, and he may—he may be searching for us."

There was a trustful light in the deep brown eyes and a longing smile touched the tender lips. Edith's face was lighted with joy as she clasped her cousin's hands.

"You're the dearest darling in the world, and no man is good enough for you," she exclaimed. "John Burt will return; I'm sure of it, and he'll be proud of you. But, Jessie, you must not let Mr. Blake propose to you. You won't, will you, Jessie?" The voice was pleading in its earnestness.

"Why?" asked Jessie in surprise.

"Because—" and Edith faltered. She lowered her eyes in confusion, but when she looked again in Jessie's face they flamed with passion.

"Oh, Jessie, can't you understand? I'm jealous of you, horribly, madly jealous," and she threw herself sobbing on her cousin's breast. "I know it's not your fault that he loves you, but you can make him stop. Please make him stop. If it wasn't for

you he would love me. Tell him—tell him anything so that he will know that you don't love him! Oh, Jessie—won't you?"

"What can I tell him?" asked Jessie in amazement. "I can't make him propose and then commend him to another. But, Edith, darling, I'm so sorry, so awfully sorry!"

When Jessie could command herself she asked if Edith really loved Jim.

"I loved him the moment I saw him, and he fell in love with you at the same instant," declared Edith Hancock, whose intuition had told her the truth. "Make him stop, Jessie; you can find some way to do it; I know you can. Oh, why are people always falling in love with those who don't love them, and are blind to those who love them to death?"

Jessie could not answer that world-old question, and vainly attempted to soothe her. In anger and mortification Edith rushed from the room, and when Jessie knocked at her door a few minutes later there was no response but the muffled sound of sobs.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

TALE OF THE TICKER

A THOUSAND men were scattered through the hall of the New York Stock Exchange. There were groups of three, five, ten, a score, and one compact mass of a hundred or more brokers. Moving like shuttles between these irregular knots of humanity were individual members—some slow and calm, others hurried and excited. Blue-uniformed messenger-boys added a tinge of color to the mottled shades from gray to black. The laughing faces and shrill cries of this modern progeny of Mercury were sharp in contrast to the stern earnestness and hoarse roar of those they served.

The clicking of innumerable telegraph instruments, the tinkle of telephone bells, the shuffling of feet in the encircling galleries, the distant murmur of street traffic, all blended with the noises from the floor into a chord which held the majesty of bass and the thrill of soprano.

As the hand of the great clock slowly crawled to the point that marked the hour of ten, the various groups compressed and assumed rounded outlines. While the last minute was speeding by, a silence came, broken only by the chattering telegraph keys.

A gong sounded. Its reverberations were lost in the vocal explosion from a thousand lungs. A regiment of men stricken with violent insanity—shouting, snarling, barking, clawing, fighting, glar-

ing—such was the scene on the floor of the exchange the morning following the defeat of the Cosmopolitan ordinances.

A moment later and the acts of these seeming maniacs were flashed around the world. While the echoes of the initial outburst yet filled the room, men in Boston, Chicago, New Orleans, San Francisco, London and Berlin, were scanning the opening quotations which had boiled to the surface from this seething cauldron.

The madness was sanity.

The chaos was order.

The frenzy was calmness.

The furor was judgment.

Into this crucible was being poured the collected opinion of the financial world. A million miles of metallic nerves focused in this centre and throbbed with the earth's history for the day. Rain on the wheat fields of Argentine, drought on the steppes of Russia, the death of a banker in Berlin, a failure in Omaha, a strike on a western railroad, a rumor of a coming Congressional report, a rise in English consuls, the appearance of a new insect in Kansas, an area of low barometer in Manitoba, the sickness of a king, the raising of a freight rate, the echoes of a battle in the Soudan, the result of a municipal election, the speech of an obscure alderman—all hurled their weight into these delicate scales and vibrated the needle which recorded values.

To these was added the impact of human passions—revenge, treachery, cunning, caution, judgment, daring, stupidity, avarice.

Wall Street is a mundane incarnation of the terrors of hell, relieved by some of the joys of heaven.

John Burt was in his office at eight o'clock, and Mr. Hawkins and James Blake joined him a few minutes later.

"Good morning, Jim," said John, extending his hand, which Blake grasped cordially. "Isn't this a glorious day? See the sun of Austerlitz."

John pointed to a broad shaft of light which streamed across his desk and illumined the bright colors of stacks of stock certificates.

"You look fit for the day's work, Jim," he said. "Your eye is clear and you look as if you had your fighting clothes on."

"I'm feeling splendid," declared Blake. "Never felt better in my life. We will win, John! I know it, and can hardly wait for the row to begin."

"Now you're talking business," roared Mr. Hawkins. "That sounds like the old Jim Blake I knew out in California. I'd began to think that these New York dudes had made an old woman out of you. We'll hang some of their pelts on our back fence before the sun goes down—eh, boys?" and he rested his giant palms on the shoulders of his younger companions and shook the room with a defiant rumble of laughter.

"Is General Carden here?" asked John.

"He's in my room," replied Blake.

"Give him the cash for that L. & O. check and have him present the option at Randolph Morris & Company the moment they are open for banking business," instructed John Burt. "Bid L. & O. above twenty-seven until General Carden has the stock in his possession. Send two witnesses along with him. That will prevent any chance for a quibble. When he comes back with the stock, turn it over to me."

"Aye, aye, General Burton!" exclaimed Blake with a profound salute. He seemed in high spirits as he left the room.

"Blake's all right this morning," observed Hawkins. "Guess he's recovered from his attacks of mullygrubs. What the devil d'ye suppose has been the matter with him, John? Has he been speculating on his own account and lost?"

"I don't know that he has," said John, apparently absorbed in the study of the early London and Berlin quotations. "Jim hasn't made a deal on his own account, to my knowledge, since we opened these offices."

"Probably a woman," growled John Hawkins. "When a man can't get into financial trouble he gets tangled up with a woman. If it wasn't for women and money this world would be fit to live in—eh, John?"

But John seemed so completely wrapped up in

a computation that he did not heed the cynical question. Mr. Hawkins jammed his hands into his pockets, sauntered to the window, and, in a voice like the hum of a dynamo, sang all he knew of "Sweet Alice, Ben Bolt." There was a gentler light beneath his shaggy eyebrows when he took his seat near John Burt.

Let us look in on another scene.

There was no outward sign of excitement in the offices of Randolph Morris & Company. A larger throng than usual crowded around the tickers and gazed at the opening quotations. Not a few of these speculators had blindly followed the lead of Arthur Morris, and yet had faith in the power of his millions. Morris took personal command of his brokers on the floor of the Stock Exchange.

"It won't be much of a shower," he said to his followers, with airy bravado. "Hang on to your stocks; we'll pass those ordinances yet. This fellow Rounds is a liar, and I'll prove it. Blake hired him to turn that trick. I control Cosmopolitan and am able to protect it against all the liars and swindlers from San Francisco to New York."

Cosmopolitan opened at a loss of several points, but the selling by Blake brokers was not so heavy as had been expected, and the stock rallied when given support by Morris and others interested with him. The young millionaire speedily regained his courage.

"Bid 'em up; bid 'em up!" he whispered to his head broker. "We've got the Blake crowd on the run already! They dare not sell. Take all they offer and bid for more!"

The man dashed into a pack of traders, and in the roar of voices which followed Cosmopolitan soared two points above its previous mark.

It was only a moment past ten o'clock when General Carden walked briskly up the marble steps and entered the Morris building. Two clerks in the employ of James Blake & Company were with him. He stopped at the outer railing and addressed Mr. Mason, the Vice-President of the company.

"I should like to speak to Mr. Morris," said the general.

"He is not here," replied Mr. Mason. "What can I do for you?"

"Accept my written resignation," said General Carden. Mr. Mason took the letter, bowed coldly, but said nothing.

"I hold an option on ten thousand shares of L. & O. stock," continued the general, producing an envelope from an inside pocket.

"Yes?" Mr. Mason raised his eyes with a faint show of interest, and tapped the brass rail with a pencil. "So I understand, General Carden."

"Under its terms I can take up the stock at a stipulated figure, provided the market price is above twenty-six dollars a share."

"That is the agreement. You owe us about two hundred and eighty thousand dollars on that stock, General Carden. Do you wish to pay it to-day?"

A sarcastic smile played around the corners of Mr. Mason's mouth.

"I do. I demand the stock and will meet the terms in cash."

"Very well, General Carden, it can quickly be arranged."

There was no change of expression on the grave face of the banker as he turned to a clerk and ordered him to produce the stock from the vaults. Mr. Mason glanced at the option and made a rapid calculation.

"Two hundred and eighty-two thousand, four hundred and sixty-seven dollars and seventeen cents," he said, passing over a slip of paper. "Is that your figure?"

General Carden bowed and motioned to one of his companions who placed a satchel on the counter. From its depths General Carden produced the money demanded and exchanged it for the stock.

"I trust your faith in the value of these certificates may not prove amiss," said Mr. Mason with an icy smile. "I bid you good day, sir."

General Carden bowed gravely and turned to the door. As he did so Arthur Morris entered, his face flushed with triumph. In his haste he ran into General Carden.

"I beg your pardon! Oh, it's you, is it?" and an evil light came to his eyes. "What in hell are you doing here? You're discharged—fired; d'ye understand? Get out of here and keep out! Get out, d'ye hear?"

Morris stepped behind the brass railing and from that retreat shook his hand threateningly at the man who had aroused his rage. General Carden deliberately removed his glasses and walked towards him.

"You are a cur and a coward, Morris!" he said, looking at the younger man with blazing eyes. "Lay a hand on me if you dare!"

Mr. Mason grasped Morris by the arm and whispered a sentence. With a muttered oath Morris turned and left the old soldier standing defiantly by the railing. A minute later General Carden entered a carriage and was driven rapidly to the office of James Blake & Company.

In the meantime Morris had followed Mr. Mason to his private office.

"I'd like to punch old Carden's head, and I'd have done it hadn't it been for you!" he declared. "What's he prowling around here for? What did he want?"

"He demanded his L. & O. stock," replied Mr. Mason.

"His L. & O. stock," repeated Morris. "Well, what of it? He didn't wish me to make him a present of it, did he? I've given him enough. Old

Carden must be getting crazy. If he comes around again tell him to dig up about three hundred thousand dollars and he can have his stock."

Morris laughed as he stepped to the ticker.

"He showed his option, demanded the stock, and paid over the money," said Mr. Mason slowly, "and I gave him the certificates."

"Old Carden took up his stock and paid over the money? What do you mean, Mason?" Morris looked blankly at the elderly broker and the tape dropped from his fingers.

"I mean just what I say, Mr. Morris," was the reply. "Do you know what has happened? With that stock you lose control of L. & O. Some one is back of General Carden in this transaction. You should be able to guess who it is after what has occurred in Cosmopolitan."

"Blake! Blake!" gasped Morris.

He clutched the arm of his chair and the muscles of his neck twitched nervously. Pacing up and down the room he burst into a storm of incoherent profanity. Mr. Mason confronted him.

"This is no time for such an exhibition," he said, sternly. "This is a serious matter and calls for action not blasphemy. Control yourself, sir!"

The ticker, which had been silent, spluttered rapidly, and the ominous sound did more to call Morris back to his senses than had the sober words of the broker. He lifted the tape and eagerly scanned the characters.

"What's that? This must be a mistake! It can't be as bad as that, don't you know! Five hundred shares of L. & O. at 38! It must mean 28?" Morris gazed at the figures like one in a trance.

There came a violent rapping on the door, and, without waiting for a response, a broker entered. His collar was torn open and his hair was rumpled and moist with perspiration.

"Blake & Company are bidding up L. & O.!" he exclaimed. "I've sold them four thousand shares up to 35, and they are yelling for more. They say that John Hawkins is after the stock for the International. How does it stand now?"

He took the tape from Arthur Morris's nerveless hand.

"Thirty-nine! Thirty-nine and a half! Six hundred at forty! A thousand at forty-one! Something's up, I tell you! What shall we do, Mr. Morris?"

Morris gazed helplessly at Mr. Mason.

"What can we do?" he asked, weakly. For hours his mind had been full of the dangers which menaced him from Cosmopolitan, and, in the moment of fancied triumph, had found himself attacked from an unexpected point. His brain was in a whirl.

A heavy step was heard in the hallway and Randolph Morris entered the room.

"You've raised hell, haven't you?" was his

greeting to his son and heir. "I told you to keep your nose out of this Cosmopolitan business. You've made a fine mess of it! I suppose you think, because the bottom hasn't fallen out of Cosmopolitan, that you're all right, don't ye? Been supporting it, haven't ye? Of course you have. You're an ass! Admit it, and take your losses. It was the first thing I saw when I opened the paper this morning, and I've come to the city in order to prevent you making as many kinds of an idiot of yourself as you are capable of. How much of that rotten stock have you bought? I'll bet this damn fool play will cost more than a million."

Randolph Morris mopped his face with a handkerchief, and reposed his ponderous bulk in an easy chair.

"What's the matter with all of you?" he demanded. "Have you lost your tongues as well as your senses?"

"Tell him about this business," said Arthur Morris, sullenly turning to Mr. Mason.

In a few words the latter explained what had occurred in L. & O. The old millionaire's face was a study during this hurried recital.

The look of anger changed to one of perplexity and then to fear. The millions amassed in a lifetime were menaced in his old age, and the fires of defence and defiance blazed again in the eyes of Randolph Morris.

Rising ponderously from his chair, he took a place by the ticker. The ship of the Morris fortunes was drifting towards the rocks, and, aroused from his slumbers, the old pilot again grasped the wheel. His eyes were not as clear as in the days when the craft was new, but his hand was steady and his courage high.

"How much L. & O. have you?" he demanded.

"Thirty-five thousand shares," replied Mr. Mason.

"How many have you sold?" addressing his son. Arthur Morris hesitated.

"Speak up!" he thundered, with an oath. "How many have you sold?"

"About seventy-five thousand."

"Hu-m-m-m. Fine outlook! Forty thousand shares short on a stock, with only a hundred thousand shares in all," growled Randolph Morris.

Great beads of perspiration stood on his forehead. "Blake and Hawkins probably hold more than fifty thousand between them. They've got us cornered! There's only one chance in a hundred for us to get out, but I'll take it. I know old Hawkins too well to think that he is taking any risks. By God, if I pull out of this thing with a dollar I'll place it where you can't find it with a set of burglar's tools!"

Randolph Morris glared at his son, fumbled for his glasses and bent over the tape.

"Fifty-five bid for L. & O.," it read. "Bid sixty for any part of ten thousand shares. Gimme that telephone! Go to the exchange, Mason, and get on the other end of this wire and I'll give you the orders. Run out doors, Arthur, and play with the children. This is a man's job. Get out of here —I don't want you around!"

"I'll stay right here," said Arthur Morris defiantly, his face purple with mortification and rage. Absorbed in his study of the figures which reeled from the ticker, Randolph Morris made no reply.

A thousand thoughts came to the old financier as with set features he studied the characters which read his ruin. He recalled his boyhood struggles for a foothold on the ladder of fortune; the painful climb to the first resting-place above the dull level of poverty; the successive advances through comfort and prosperity to affluence, and then the rapid ascent to financial pre-eminence. And now the earth crumbled beneath his feet, and he felt himself slipping over the precipice of bankruptcy!

With a cruel smile on his thin lips he had pushed others over the brink on which he now was poised. With a cold heart he had been deaf to all pleadings for mercy, and knew full well that none would be extended to him. He cursed the hour when his son was born. He had begotten a fool who had fallen into the trap he had fashioned and set years before Arthur Morris was born.

The ticker was singing a weird refrain and the

telephone added its note of despair. When the Morris brokers changed from sellers to buyers a wild scene took place on the floor of the Exchange. Only a few hundred shares were secured, when representatives of James Blake & Company raised the bids to seventy. The stock was at par before the Morris interests had been able to buy a thousand shares. It was generally known that Arthur Morris was heavily short on L. & O. and ominous rumors were in circulation.

Shortly before noon a news agency made public a statement which hastened the crisis. The printed slip read as follows;

> Mr. John Hawkins of San Francisco, the well-known magnate and President of the International Railroad Company, has issued the following statement from the office of James Blake & Company:
>
> "Interests identified with the International Railroad Company have purchased control of the stock of the L. & O. Railroad Company, which will be merged with the former corporation.
>
> JOHN HAWKINS."

A few minutes later another bulletin was issued. It read:

> The deal in L. & O. was engineered by Mr. James Blake, the dashing young operator whose advent in New York was signalized by the recent upheaval in prices. For several weeks Mr. Blake has quietly been absorbing blocks of L. & O. To-day he secured ten thousand shares from General Marshall Carden, which, with the holdings of Mr. John Hawkins gives the syndicate of which Mr. Blake is the head absolute control of this valuable property. Another railroad company has been

a bidder for control, but the Carden stock gives Mr. Blake the coveted advantage.

It is rumored that a well-known and powerful banking house is short this stock to the amount of nearly forty thousand shares. It opened at 29½ and rapidly advanced to 75, and then by leaps and bounds reached 125. It is believed that only a few scattered shares are yet in the market, and that the stock is cornered.

At this writing a violent slump in Cosmopolitan is in progress. The concern which is supposed to be short in L. & O. has been active in the support of Cosmopolitan and kindred stocks, and it is assumed that it is unable to protect them. Cosmopolitan abruptly declined from 37 to 22 and seems absolutely without support.

Later.—It is rumored that the banking house of Randolph Morris & Company has suspended.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

FATHER AND SON

ONE by one the directors of the bank had entered the room where Randolph Morris was making his fight against overwhelming odds. Some he recognized by an almost imperceptible bow, but no words came from his lips as he bent over the tape. The faces of the directors were pale and drawn from tension.

It was like a scene in a death chamber. A vast fortune was in its agonies, and the mourners moved noiselessly about the room or stood in groups and conversed in whispers.

With his hands thrust deep into his pockets, his head bowed and an unlighted cigarette between his lips, Arthur Morris paced up and down the room. Not once did he glance in the direction of his father.

When L. & O. had mounted to eighty dollars a share, Randolph Morris changed his tactics and attempted to check the rise by throwing all his holdings on the market. In less than an hour he hurled thirty-five thousand shares into the speculative whirlpool.

It was like stemming Niagara with a straw. The price did not sag. The powerful interests back of L. & O. pledged three millions of dollars for this stock and clamored for more. The firm of Randolph Morris & Company yet lacked nearly forty thousand shares with which to meet their con-

tracts. In addition to this they had agreed to pay forty dollars a share for sixty thousand shares of Cosmopolitan which was then being offered for twenty-five dollars a share.

In the language of stock gambling they were "whip-sawed." They had sold good stocks and bought worthless ones.

In response to a demand for margins, Randolph Morris deposited several millions in cash and valid securities. Alarmed by rumors, patrons of the bank formed in long lines and demanded their deposits. The ticker continued to sing its remorseless refrain. L. & O. climbed to dizzy heights and Cosmopolitan dropped point by point. Every unit of advance in the former meant a loss of $40,000; every decline of a point in Cosmopolitan subtracted $60,000 from the Morris fortunes.

There was no gleam of hope, but grim in defeat the old banker stood by the wheel and watched the ship of his fortunes as she swiftly neared the reefs of ruin.

A clerk entered and handed to Randolph Morris the yellow slip of paper containing the statement made by John Hawkins. He read it slowly, crumpled it in his hands and threw it on the floor.

Grasping his massive gold-headed cane he brought it down on the glass dome which covered the delicate mechanism of the ticker. One of the flying fragments cut his cheek and a few drops of blood slowly trickled down his face.

"The corporation of Randolph Morris & Company is bankrupt!" he said, rising to his feet and looking into the faces of his astounded associates. "The Board of Directors will convene at once and take formal action to that effect. Be seated, gentlemen, and come to order. We will dispense with the reading of the minutes of the last meeting. You may make the motion for suspension, Mr. Mason."

The wrecked ticker was silent forever. Its broken wheels and springs responded no longer to the electrical impulse which made it instinct with life—the tale-bearer of fortune or of disaster.

A shaft of sunlight glinted the broken glass. A louder roar came from the Stock Exchange, but it presaged nothing to the men who were gathered in the inner office of Randolph Morris & Company.

The formality of declaring a suspension of the bank was soon ended. The word was passed to the clerks, and the glass windows before the paying tellers were closed in the faces of those who were demanding their deposits. A moan of rage and despair went up from the long line, but officers cleared the room and an employe tacked a notice of suspension on the great oaken doors.

When Randolph Morris adjourned the directors' meeting he looked about for his son but he was not in the room. He found Arthur Morris within the caged enclosure occupied by the paying teller. In his hands were several packages of money.

"What are you doing there?" demanded Randolph Morris.

"Cashing a check," was the sullen reply.

"You're a thief as well as a fool," roared Randolph Morris, his hand on the door and his features convulsed with passion. "No officer of a bank on the point of suspension has a right to accept or withdraw funds, and you know it."

He grabbed Arthur Morris by the shoulder and dragged him through the narrow door-way.

"My curse goes with that money?" he shouted, his face convulsed with rage. "You have dragged me down to shame and poverty in my old age. I hope, by God, that everything you buy with that money will give you pain! I don't know how much you've got, but you'll live too long if you live to spend it. I wish to God—"

His voice was choked, the blood surged to his temples, his hands clutched at his throat, and with a gasp for breath he fell heavily to the floor.

Before Arthur Morris realized what had happened, others were by his father's side. The stricken old financier was borne to a couch and simple restoratives applied. He partially recovered consciousness before a physician arrived, but again sank into a most alarming condition.

"Apoplexy," said the physician, in answer to a question. "Is this his first attack?" he asked Arthur Morris.

"I don't know," was the reply. "I've seen

the governor so mad he couldn't speak, several times, but never so bad as this."

As he spoke Randolph Morris opened his eyes and they rested on his son.

"Take him away," he said, averting his eyes. "Take him away, and give me a chance to live."

"You're all right, governor," said Arthur Morris, as the doctor gave him a signal to stay out of sight. "Keep cool and you'll come out on top. I feel as bad as you do about it, but there's no use in kicking. Brace up and take your medicine like a man; we may win out yet."

To which encouraging advice Randolph Morris made no reply, and the son left the room, after vainly attempting to persuade the physician to remove the patient to his apartment.

"Your father must have absolute rest and quiet," he said, as he gave Arthur Morris the address of a private hospital. "He is out of immediate danger, but is likely to have a relapse at any moment. I will advise you of his condition and let you know when you can see him."

As Randolph Morris was tenderly carried down the steps, through an angry crowd, and placed in an ambulance, he opened his eyes and looked longingly at the building which bore his name. Thus he made his last journey away from the roar and turmoil of Wall Street; a mental, physical and financial wreck, cast on the shores of oblivion by a storm terrific and unforeseen.

Arthur Morris, stripped of all power by the action of the directors, stood amid the wreck of his fortunes.

He was a witness to the compromise by which a representative of James Blake & Company agreed to terms, which, while protecting the depositors, called for the sacrifice of the millions which once stood in his name. The fifty thousand dollars he had succeeded at the last moment in drawing from the bank was all that was left to him.

He thought of James Blake and uttered an oath. He thought of General Carden, and then of Jessie Carden. The money he had lost had made her an heiress. And she would marry James Blake! The certainty of this was maddening. He thought of the great mansion, of his yacht, the Voltaire, of a thousand vanishing luxuries torn from him in an hour, but never once did he think of John Burt.

Morris was driven rapidly up town. His ears were assailed by the cries of newsboys yelling the jarring refrain, "All about the great bank failure!" "All about Randolph Morris & Co.!"

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

BLAKE'S SACRIFICE

THROUGH the long hours of that eventful day General Carden's eyes were fixed on the stock board. Few of the excited customers of James Blake & Company recognized the ex-banker, and none knew the reason for his absorbing interest in the fluctuations of the stock labeled L. & O.

His features betrayed little excitement while the price mounted rapidly from thirty to fifty, and thence by wild flights to par and above. But his heart was beating with a great joy.

Years before he had watched with agony the steady decline which culminated in his bankruptcy, but now the ticker sang a song of triumph.

He walked out into the street, through the hurrying throngs, and strolled along the paths of Battery Park. It was difficult to realize that the events of the preceding weeks were not dreams.

Who was this man Blake, and why had he offered to place a fortune in his hand? Why had this stranger come from out the West, and by the magic of his touch, transformed a worthless stock into one of so great value that millionaires struggled madly for its possession? Perhaps failure would yet dash the cup of happiness from his lips? The Morris interests were powerful, and General Carden had witnessed the final collapse of many ventures like Blake's.

When he took his last look at the stock board L. & O. was quoted at 105. He nervously drew a slip of paper from his pocket and made a rapid calculation. If Blake chose to realize at the quotation, General Carden's share of the profits would be nearly eight hundred thousand dollars. The figures dazzled him, and he made the calculation anew, only to find it accurate. This represented more than the fortune he had lost.

A wild impulse came which urged him to demand of Blake the sale of his stock. What right had he to imperil that which would insure the happiness of his daughter and the repose of his old age? Hurriedly he retraced his steps until he reached Broadway, and again he entered Blake's office.

An hour had passed, and he hardly dared look at the quotations. Perhaps the deal had collapsed? Perhaps—

"L. & O. 145, 145½, 146½," called out the man who was reading the ticker. "Two thousand L. & O. at 150!"

An exultant shout went up from the crowd of men who surrounded James Blake. His handsome face was aglow with pleasure as they slapped him on the back.

"My congratulations, general," Blake said, grasping the old soldier's hand. "Our little pool is working splendidly! Do you feel like getting out at 150, general? I wouldn't advise you to do

so, but if you wish it can be arranged. I have a customer who will take the stock off your hands at that figure."

"I—I am entirely satisfied to let it alone," said General Carden, drawing himself up proudly. "Handle my stock according to your judgment. The subordinate should not question the policy of a victorious commander."

"L. & O. 155," came shrilly from the watcher at the ticker.

"Mr. Burton wishes to see you," whispered a clerk to Blake, and the famous head of the firm turned and left General Carden.

General Carden, like one in a trance, watched the quotations during the closing hours of that eventful afternoon. There was no ebb in the rising tide of his fortunes, but a strange fear possessed him lest the riches within reach of his grasp should be swept away by some fatal turn of fortune. But pride was stronger than fear, and nerved by it he awaited the crisis.

He saw the Morris millions crumble before the impact of the final charge.

He heard the shouts of victory and found himself shaking hands and laughing with strangers. He felt a strong clasp on his shoulder and turned to see James Blake.

"We settle with Randolph Morris & Company at 175," he whispered. "Your share of the profits is nearly a million and a half. I'll call at your house

this evening and give you a check for the exact amount."

"I can find no words to express my feelings," said General Carden, deeply affected. "I do not think that I am entitled to so large a share of these profits. I—I—really I do not know what to say to you, Mr. Blake. You have made me the happiest man in the world. God bless and reward you."

"Don't thank me," replied James Blake.

A strange expression came over his face and a look of pain to his dark eyes. "I am not—I should not—" He paused, released General Carden's hand and turning abruptly rushed across the room and vanished into an inner office.

In the turmoil of his own feelings General Carden paid little attention to this strange action. Six hours before he had entered these rooms all but penniless. He left them more than a millionaire.

Never had the sun shone so brightly as on that glorious afternoon. Never had Broadway been decked in so regal a garb. The buildings which once frowned upon him now opened a grand perspective to his triumphal march. The blood of youth tingled in his veins. His step was light, his eyes bright, his head erect.

In a darkened room in a remote quarter of the city, a gray-haired man gasped for breath and moaned in his delirium. A great financial battle had been fought. Randolph Morris was one of the stricken victims, and Marshall Carden was one of the victors.

In this age of commercial and industrial barbarism, man must climb to glory over the dead and mangled bodies of the losers. Commercial competition has all the horrors and none of the chivalry of physical warfare.

Thoughts such as these came to John Burt when the news circulated that Randolph Morris had been stricken in his office. The blow aimed at the son had fallen with crushing force on the father. In the hour of victory John Burt was silent and sad, and John Hawkins was not slow to glean the reason.

"I wouldn't worry over Randolph Morris," he said, with a gruffness which was assumed. "The old man will recover. One stroke of apoplexy won't kill him."

"Write to Randolph Morris," said John, addressing Blake, "and say that his personal property is exempt in this settlement. He has scheduled it as having a value of nearly a million dollars. I shall not take it from him. He's an old man, with daughters and others dependent on him."

"Good for you, Burt!" exclaimed John Hawkins. "It isn't business, but business is hell—as old Sherman said about war. I'm going to my hotel to take a nap. Where can I see you this evening? Dine with me at the hotel at nine o'clock. What d'ye say? You, too, Blake."

Both accepted the invitation. For some moments after Mr. Hawkins had left no word was

spoken between John Burt and James Blake. Each was busy with his thoughts, but John broke the silence.

"How did General Carden act when he realized his good fortune?" he asked.

"He was the happiest man I ever saw," replied Blake. "You should have seen him, John! The tears stood in his eyes as he thanked me. I felt like dropping through the floor."

"You are to meet him this evening, are you not?"

"I am going to give him the check. Here it is," and he passed the little strip of paper, eloquent in its figures, to John for his inspection. John glanced at it and smiled.

"When is Miss Carden expected to return?" he asked, quietly.

"I'll try to find out to-night," said Blake, looking his partner full in the eyes. "My head has been so full of stocks that I've thought of nothing else. But I'll know all about it, John, before I meet you and Hawkins at dinner. Perhaps Jessie —or rather Miss Carden—is back now. Who knows? This is your lucky day, old fellow, and all kinds of things may happen before midnight. Wouldn't it be great if I went up to the Bishop house and found her there? Of course I wouldn't say a word to spoil the surprise you have planned. Well, I must be going. Hope I'll have good news for you when I see you later."

Carefully replacing the precious check in his pocketbook, Blake left the room. He managed to evade the financial representatives of the newspapers and was driven to his apartments.

Early in the evening Blake rang the bell of the Bishop mansion, and was greeted by General Carden.

"It is a pleasure, General Carden, to tender you this check, which represents your share of the profits. Don't say a word of thanks to me, for I do not deserve any credit. Is Miss Carden at home, and may I see her for a moment?"

"She will be delighted to see you. I will call her."

The general disappeared, and James Blake lay back in his chair, with his eyes fixed on the portrait of Jessie Carden.

The slender figure, with the bunch of goldenrod at the waist, the proud poise of the little head, the delicately chiseled features—he gazed at the artist's inspired work until a film stole over his eyes.

He heard the faint rustle of a garment and turned to see Jessie Carden as she entered the room. A tender light glowed in her brown eyes, but there was something wistful in the smile; a blending of happiness, restraint and pity. The eyes dropped for a moment as they met his frank gaze, but her voice was clear and sweet as she offered her hand and said:

"You have made this the happiest day of our lives, Mr, Blake. I—"

"Not another word," interrupted James Blake. "You must not thank me. Please don't Jessie. It's the only favor I ask."

"Why not?"

The parted lips and questioning eyes were eloquent with surprise.

"Why not?" she repeated.

"Because I don't want you to," he said, releasing the little hand.

His heart beat fast as he gazed into her face, but in that moment he gained the final victory, and only the numbing pain of wounded passion remained.

Less than a day had passed since he had resolved to surrender all hope for the love of Jessie Carden. Why had he done so? James Blake could not answer that question. He had not calmly weighed his chances of success against those of failure.

Like a flash it dawned upon him that he could not—that he must not—be disloyal to John Burt. He did not reason it out—it was told to him in that voiceless, wordless language which has no name or key.

A strange happiness stole over him as he sat by her side and listened to the music of her voice. For the first time in his life James Blake felt himself almost worthy of the love of such a woman. Had

fate traced their paths along other lines, he believed that she would have listened to an avowal which so often had trembled on his lips.

James Blake did not pose before the mirror of his inner consciousness as a martyr or a hero. Those who will attempt to analyze and determine the complex motives which impel them to any important action may then pass judgment on James Blake. He was as generous as he was selfish, and as forgiving as he was impulsive. Like a thoughtless child he reached out after forbidden things. He loved everything which a healthy normal man should love.

He had loved that woman, and the kindled fires of his passion dulled the flame of friendship. There had been moments when he was able to forget John Burt—wild, blissful moments when the vision of Jessie Carden shut out all the world and selfishness became exalted into love. In the strong presence of the friend of his boyhood and the partner of his young manhood, he saw the fathomless void which lay between his extended arms and the woman he loved. Ardent fancy spanned this gulf with bridges, but they were arches of cobwebs when he stood before John Burt.

No poison of envy or jealousy now turned his friendship for John Burt into hatred. One man in all the world was good enough for Jessie Carden—his friend, John Burt. Loving her none the less, he respected John more. In a few hours John should

know the truth. Surely Blake could expect forgiveness for falling in love with Jessie Carden.

"You must not imagine," he said, "that your father is under the slightest obligations to me. On the contrary, our firm is indebted to him. The stock which he held was the key to the situation. Without it we could have done nothing. We have simply been able to verify the general's confidence in its value, and he is the one to be congratulated on the outcome."

"I don't believe a word you say," replied Jessie Carden, laughing. "I'm not so stupid about these Wall Street affairs as you imagine. If it had not been for you, Mr. Morris would have defrauded papa out of all his property."

"Speaking of Morris reminds me of something which has often puzzled me," said Blake, changing the subject. "Will you excuse me for being inquisitive, Miss Carden?"

"You are assuming a woman's prerogative, and I warn you that Mr. Morris is not an agreeable topic."

"It's about that portrait," said Blake, pointing to the canvas. "I'm in for it now, but I may as well go ahead. The first time I ever met Arthur Morris I saw your portrait in his library room. It has always puzzled me. Some time I'll tell you why."

"My portrait in Mr. Morris's room!" exclaimed Jessie, the color mounting to her cheeks. "Surely you are jesting, Mr. Blake!"

"It was probably a copy, though he told me it was the original," replied Blake. "He said you had it painted for him in Berlin, and that you presented it to him. The first time I came here I saw this one and thought it a remarkable coincidence."

"There is no mystery about it," said Jessie, her eyes flashing with anger. "Mr. Morris saw fit to take advantage of papa's bankruptcy, which gave him possession of our Boston residence. This portrait hung on its walls, and he doubtless had a copy made from it. This is consistent with other acts from which we have suffered at his hands. I—"

The portieres parted and Edith Hancock entered the room. Her eyes rested first on Blake and then on Jessie.

"Pardon this intrusion," she said. "I am looking for a book and did not know that any one was here. You are to be congratulated, Mr. Blake; doubly congratulated."

There was a tremor in the voice, but a proud flash of the lovely eyes as Edith bowed slightly, and, brushing the portieres aside, left the room.

"Don't go, Edith!" cried Jessie.

There was no response, and Jessie was too wise to follow her fair cousin. For some moments no words were spoken.

"I am going to tell you the story of that portrait," said Jessie. The crimson touched her cheeks and a light, such as Blake had never seen, was in her eyes. "Do you remember what you said last

night? You said that it seemed as if we had been friends for years, and the same thought has occurred to me. I'm going to presume on that occult friendship and tell you a secret. That portrait belongs to John Burt!"

A few hours before this arrow would have buried its barbs in James Blake's heart, but now it went wide of its mark and only the archer was in pain.

Jessie felt herself an ingrate as she uttered these words. She had wounded him while he came as a messenger bearing a princely gift. She had innocently aroused his love only to spurn it before it had been declared. Her lips trembled, and for one brief moment she would that the cruel words were not spoken. She raised her eyes and looked into James Blake's face. He played his part with the consummate art of an actor.

"John Burt? The John Burt I knew as a boy? What do you mean, Jessie?"

She opened an album and handed it to him. On one page was the faded duplicate of the photograph from which had been painted the portrait he had seen so often in John Burt's study room in San Francisco. Opposite it was a photograph of John Burt. The album opened naturally to these pages—sure proof that certain white fingers had sought them out many, many times.

"It was only a week before he went away," said Jessie, softly, "that these pictures were taken. It

was a glorious day in autumn, and our horses had galloped miles and miles. Near the bay shore in Hingham we saw a traveling photographer, and I suggested that we have our pictures taken. We each gave the other one, and I have mine yet. We—"

"And he has his yet," said Blake, a far-off look in his eyes.

"He has! How do you know, Mr. Blake? Have you—"

"Of course he has it. I'll wager dear old John has never parted with that little gift. Wherever he may be he wears that picture nearest his heart. Excuse my interruption, Jessie; I'm greatly interested."

"You spoke as if you knew," said Jessie, her heart beating wildly. "The last day I saw him he spoke of you. We sailed out to Black Reef and we talked of many things. John said he was going to California, and wondered if you were there and if he would see you. That seems ages ago, but it's only five years. And then we sailed back to the grove and he quarreled with Arthur Morris. You have heard the story. That night we parted, and a thousand times I have heard the hoofs of his horse as he galloped away in the darkness."

She paused, but Blake, with his eyes on the portrait, said nothing.

"When you told me that you were John Burt's friend I liked you," she said, in a voice which

thrilled his very being. "You have been all that he said in your favor, and many times more. I have often thought how strange it is that the friend of his boyhood should be the one to come to our aid when all seemed darkest. I would that it were in my power to repay you, Mr. Blake. You have at your command everything which money can furnish, and I can offer you only my friendship and my prayer for your happiness."

He took her hand and impulsively pressed it to his lips.

"You have made me very, very happy," he said, rising to his feet as she tenderly withdrew her hand. "I should like to tell you something which—which—but I must not tell it. Some day you will know me better. Will you promise not to be angry with me then? Will you promise, Jessie?"

"Angry with you? I am sure I shall never be angry with you."

"That is your promise?"

"That is my promise."

He laughed gaily as she repeated the words, but his lips quivered and his eyes glistened suspiciously. In a moment he was the careless, happy Blake, chatting lightly on trivial subjects.

"I must keep an engagement," he said, looking at his watch. "A friend of mine is here from California, and I'm to take dinner with him. He's a royal good fellow, rich, handsome, cultivated, and —and everything which a good fellow should be.

I'd like to introduce him. May I call with him to-morrow evening?"

"Any friend of yours is welcome, especially a paragon with such bewildering attractions," laughed Jessie. "Good-bye, until to-morrow evening."

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

THROUGH THE HEART

IT lacked several minutes of the hour fixed for dinner when Blake strolled through the hotel cafe and thence into the lobby. The babble of voices, the gesticulations and the nervous energy which pervaded the atmosphere were not in harmony with Blake's feelings.

"Jessie was afraid I was going to say something to-night, and so she told me that she loved John," he mused, throwing away a half-smoked cigar. "Dear old John! Lucky old John! Jessie doesn't even know that he is alive and yet she's patiently waiting for him. I wonder how she came to fall in love with John? He wouldn't look at a woman in San Francisco. This is a strange world. I never noticed until to-night how remarkably beautiful Edith Hancock is. She thinks Jessie and I are engaged. That's what she meant this evening when she said I was to be doubly congratulated. Yes, I'm to be congratulated a lot! Hello, what's the row? That sounds like Morris! I suppose he's drunk. If he had a spark of decency he'd be with his father. Here he comes!"

Morris pushed his way through the crowd and was followed by young Kingsley. They had been engaged in a wordy dispute which promised to end in blows when outsiders interfered. Morris had been drinking steadily for hours. And as he drank his form grew more erect, his brain clearer and his

hand more steady. There are times when liquor possesses no power of intoxication. Against the poison of a rattlesnake whiskey is soothing as milk. The venom of defeat raged in the veins of Arthur Morris, and the fiery liquor acted as an antidote.

Not until he was within a few feet of Blake did he recognize his rival. Though anxious to avoid a meeting, Blake scorned to retreat or to turn his back.

Morris stopped squarely in front of him. His lips parted with a sneer and his fingers toyed with a small walking stick. Blake leaned carelessly against a marble column, his eyes fixed on the man who confronted him. Had Blake been in a Western mining camp his fingers would have reached for the feel of a gun, but in a metropolitan hotel he had no sense of danger. The incident was trivial, but disagreeable.

"Lend me a thousand, Blake," demanded Morris.

A whisper passed around the room and many turned to watch these two men, whose names had filled the public prints of the day.

"Certainly," said Blake, a strange smile lighting up his handsome face. "Is a thousand enough, Morris?"

Blake took a wallet from his inner pocket and handed Morris a bill.

"And a match," ordered Morris, advancing a step nearer.

"The hotel furnishes matches," responded Blake, coolly.

"Here's a match," said Kingsley.

"Thanks, old chap."

Morris calmly struck a light and shielded it with his hand against the draught from an open door.

Holding the bright new thousand dollar note a few feet from Blake's head he ignited it. As it slowly burned up he turned it deftly until only a charred corner remained in his hand. No word was spoken as the blue and yellow flame died out. A circle of men had formed around the two.

"Very clever, Morris," said Blake, replacing his pocket-book. "Must be a new sensation to burn my money? First of it you ever saw, isn't it? Did you burn your fingers—again—Morris?"

"Come on, old fellow," pleaded Kingsley, laying his hand on Morris's shoulder. "Come on; you're due at the club."

"Give this mucker his thousand, Kingsley," ordered Morris, turning his back to Blake.

"Sorry, my dear fellow, but haven't it with me, don't you know," replied the cautious Kingsley.

"Don't bother about repaying it," said Blake. "We'll let it go as your commission for advising me to purchase L. & O. You were singularly accurate, Morris, in your estimate of its value."

"Don't go too far with me, Blake!" Morris exclaimed, turning fiercely on the speaker. "I'll

not stand for it, do you hear? I've lost, and I'm still a gentleman; you've won, and are yet a cad! You've taken my money and won the woman. Keep away from me."

"I didn't seek this interview," said Blake, his face flushed with rising anger, "but since it's to be our last one, I'm going to tell you something. I've not a dollar of your money and am not your rival in any respect. I didn't plan the deal which broke you, and do not share in the profits."

"Blake, you're a —." Morris checked himself and glared at the other with an expression of mingled hate and surprise.

"Say it if you wish," responded Blake. "I never strike drunkards, and you are safe. Listen to me, Morris, and I'll tell you something that will sober you. Do you remember John Burt? I guess you do. He was the country boy who dragged you out of a chair by the scruff of the neck for insulting a young lady upon whom you had forced your society. You recall him, don't you?"

"What of him?" demanded Morris, sullenly. At the mention of John Burt's name Morris instinctively raised his hand to his breast. There a bullet had plowed its way while he struggled in close combat on the sanded floor of the old tavern. The scene, with all its horror, came back to him. The table, lined with bottles and glasses, the drunken laughter, the ribald talk, the insulting toast, and then—John Burt.

"John Burt—what of him?" repeated Morris. Perhaps some vague suspicion of the truth came to him in that moment. "That country lout can come back, or stay away, or go to the devil, for all I care."

"That country lout has come back," said Blake deliberately. "I had the pleasure this afternoon, my dear Morris, of transferring to John Burt the various stocks and bonds which you and your father tendered to James Blake & Company in settlement of your liabilities. Permit me to let you into a deep secret, my dear Morris. John Burt is James Blake & Company. *He* is the Wizard of Wall Street. I am—nothing. I don't count, don't you see? In my feeble way I've attempted to carry out John Burt's instructions. You seemed to stand across his path and he blotted you out. He crushed you as he would a buzzing fly. He forced you to disgorge General Carden's fortune. *He* will wed the woman on whom you have forced your addresses. Do I make myself plain, Morris?"

Morris gazed at James Blake and for a moment seemed incapable of speech. He moistened his lips with his tongue and fumbled nervously at his watch chain.

"I—I—I think you lie, Blake," he stammered, after a long pause. "It's all a lie, don't you know, Kingsley."

Blake raised his eyes and saw John Burt and Mr. Hawkins entering the room. Pausing not a

second to weigh the consequences, he grasped Morris by the shoulders and whirled him around.

"Hands off of me," exclaimed Morris, his voice harsh with rage and his eyes red with the flame of anger. "Hands off!" he repeated.

Morris threw one arm behind him, but Blake, scornful of his opponent, and thinking only of the dramatic climax which offered itself, took no warning.

"Calm yourself, Morris," he said soothingly. "Anger does not become you. I want you to look your best, for here comes our mutual friend, John Burt! It's so long since you've seen each other that an introduction is in order. Hello, John!"

Blake released his grasp and Morris drew back in a defiant attitude. With careless contempt Blake ignored Morris, and his eyes followed John Burt and Hawkins as they came towards him. John was listening to his elderly companion and both were circling the group which surrounded Blake and Morris.

The contrast between Burt and Hawkins was sharp but pleasing. John Hawkins—his dark eyes masked by bushy lashes, his tawny beard half covering his massive chest, the locks of his iron gray hair showing beneath his broad brimmed hat, his firm tread, the deep mellow bass of his voice—he was the perfect type of that sturdy American manhood transplanted from New England to California and crowned with the glorious fruitage of years.

The man who walked beside John Hawkins had been gifted by nature with lines of figure which instantly commanded admiration. John Burt at twenty-eight had the grace of youth and the symmetry of manhood. There is in physical beauty, be it masculine or feminine, something so elusive that it scorns description by comparison. John Burt looked health, strength, vigor, intelligence, good fellowship. The texture of his skin, the light of his eyes, the pose of his head—all proclaimed the virility of perfect manhood.

At the call of his name John turned and saw Blake. His face lighted with a smile as he stopped and then walked towards the group.

The three men were almost in a line, with Blake in the center. Morris fixed his gaze on the newcomer, but John did not look in his direction.

The muscles of Morris's face twitched, and a desperate look came to his eyes. With a quick motion his arm came from behind his back and something glittered in his hand. In the adjoining cafe an orchestra sounded the notes of a march.

"Hello, Jim," said John. "Are we on time?"

"Mr. Burt," said Blake, his dark eyes twinkling with deviltry, and his voice clear as a bell, "permit me to introduce—"

He turned to Morris with a mocking smile on his lips. He heard the click of metal and saw the flash of polished steel as Morris raised his arm and leveled a revolver at John Burt.

"I bought this for myself! Take it, John Burt," he cried.

He fired before the words were out of his mouth. The spectators who stood their ground saw James Blake throw himself forward the moment before a spit of fire came from the muzzle of the weapon. They saw his figure reel through the smoke, and they saw Morris fire again.

Like a sharp echo came an answering shot from Blake. He had half fallen, with his right knee and left hand on the marble floor. Morris's second shot was aimed over his head at John Burt, who had dashed at Morris and was almost over the wavering figure of his friend.

When Blake fired, Morris arms went up with a jerk. His revolver fell with a crash on the floor. One of the cartridges exploded and the bullet buried itself in a heavy oaken chair.

"God!" Morris cried.

Like a column pushed from its base he fell. He turned half over and lay motionless. A number of letters were shaken out of his inner coat pocket and scattered on the floor. A pair of broken eye-glasses were near his head. His watch dropped from his waistcoat, and, by some chance, the case was opened. The hands marked the hour of nine.

"I've got him, John," gasped Blake, "and I guess he's got me! Are you hurt, John?"

He again raised his weapon unsteadily, and pitched forward into John Burt's arms.

CHAPTER FORTY

SHADOW OF DEATH

"STAND back and give the man air!" roared John Hawkins, pushing aside the morbid crowd which surged around the motionless bodies. "Bear a hand, John, we'll take Jim to my room."

Sam Rounds touched John on the arm.

"Can I dew anything, John?" he asked, his homely face pathetic in its sorrow.

"Call the best surgeons," ordered John Burt, in a low tone. "We shall be in Mr. Hawkins's room, on the second floor."

Officers waved back the spectators, and, tenderly raising the inert figure, Burt and Hawkins carried it up the marble stairs. A moment later the house surgeon, and a physician who had volunteered his services, entered the room.

With bated breath John watched the surgeon as he opened the waistcoat and cut away the blood-soaked shirt. For a moment he laid his head against Blake's breast. It seemed an age before the answer came.

"He lives," said the surgeon, reaching for an emergency case.

"Has he a chance?" demanded Hawkins, in a hoarse whisper.

An almost imperceptible shrug of the shoulders was the ominous answer. He held a vial to Blake's nostrils, and the watchers saw the faint

shudder which told of a halt in the march of death. Then the breast heaved convulsively, and James Blake opened his eyes and looked squarely into John Burt's face.

"Hello, John!" he said, faintly. "What's the matter? What's happened, old man?"

Before the surgeon could interfere, Blake pressed his hand over his heart, raised it and looked at the red stained fingers. Wearily he closed his eyes, as in deep thought.

"I remember now," he said, softly. "It was Morris. I got him, John, didn't I? But I guess he's got me."

"You must keep quiet, Jim," said John Burt, tenderly clasping Blake's hand and pushing back the damp locks from his forehead. "You are a long way from being dead, old man, but you must reserve your strength and obey the surgeons."

"I don't want a surgeon—not now," declared Blake, in a stronger voice and a quickening intelligence in his dark eyes. "Hello, Hawkins! You won't be offended, will you, Hawkins, if I ask you and the doctors to leave me alone with John for a minute or two?"

"Certainly not, my boy, if the doctors say so."

The surgeon turned to John and whispered a few words, which did not escape Blake's strangely revived senses.

"You'll probe for nothing until I talk to John!" he asserted. "I'm going to live long enough to

Like a column pushed from a base he fell.

tell John something that no one else shall hear, and then I don't care how much you carve me, or if I live or die. Send them out of here, John, or I'll get up and chase them out."

John called the two medical men to one side.

"I have sent for other surgeons, and they will be here soon," he said. "Unless an immediate operation is necessary, we shall lose more by refusing his request than by granting it. I cannot explain why."

"It is a dangerous operation, and I consent to delay it until others arrive," said the surgeon. "I have sent for Dr. Harkness."

He held his hand for a moment on Blake's pulse, administered a few drops of stimulant, and motioning to Hawkins and the physician, the three silently left the room.

"Sit close by me, John, and let me hold your hand," said Blake. "Dear old John!"

Tears glistened in his eyes as he clasped the other's hand.

"I don't wish you to tell me anything, Jim," said John, soothingly, as he gently returned the clasp. "Just keep quiet, Jim, and make up your mind that you are going to get well and be the same generous old Jim Blake that I have known all these years."

"You know what I've done!" exclaimed Blake, his eyes glistening with excitement. "You know all, and yet forgive me! Do you, John? Tell me, old man; it means more for me than drugs or probes."

"I do, Jim. Say no more about it, old partner, but lay quiet and keep all your strength for the crisis which is coming."

"I don't care what's coming. This is my punishment, John, but your words take all the sting out of it. I met Jessie, John, and fell in love with her! I tried to stop myself, but it was no use. I met her the first night I went to General Carden's, and since then I have been tossed back and forth between heaven and hell. I lied to you, John; lied with my lips and in my heart."

"Say no more about it, Jim," John almost commanded. "You made a false step, but you regretted it, and have done all you could to prove it."

A proud, happy smile lighted up Blake's face and was reflected in his eyes.

"You have seen Jessie and she has told you all?"

John shook his head.

"And yet you know the truth. I loved her madly, John, but a few words from you, John, after you learned the truth, brought me back to earth. Then I knew to what a depth I had fallen. I said nothing to Jessie, John. No word of love ever passed my lips. I did not know what I was trying to do until you silently spoke to me. I was going to tell you all about it to-night, John. I saw Jessie this evening, and told her that I was to dine with a friend of mine from California—you, John, you! And to-morrow evening I promised her that I would bring that unnamed

friend to her house. That was my little surprise, John, but it was not to be."

"I shall call the surgeons if you say another word," declared John, who feared a change for the worse.

James Blake sank back on the pillows, a rapt look on his pale face, though excruciating pain was gnawing at his breast. After an interval of silence he opened his eyes and looked appealingly at John Burt.

"I should like to see Jessie. Will you send for her, John?"

"At once," was the answer.

The door opened softly and Dr. Harkness and other surgeons entered the room.

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

A MENDACIOUS GOD

"HERE'S a message for you, Jessie! The man says he will wait for an answer. I'm just dying from curiosity."

Jessie Carden was reading when Edith Hancock rushed into her room.

"A message for me?" Her hand trembled as she broke the seal. "I hope nothing has happened to papa."

"The general came in a few minutes ago and is in the library," said Edith. "Read it, Jessie."

Too impatient to wait, she leaned over Jessie's shoulder. The note bore the letterhead of a hotel and was written in a firm but scrawling hand. It read:

> Miss Jessie Carden,
> Madison Avenue.
> Mr. James Blake has been seriously wounded by a pistol shot and may not recover. He wishes to see you. If possible, come at once.
> SAMUEL L. ROUNDS.

When the purport of the message dawned upon her, Edith snatched the paper from Jessie's hand and devoured it with straining eyes.

"He may not recover!" she moaned. "He may not recover! Oh, what has happened? What has happened to him? I am going to him! He shall not die! Hurry, Jessie, hurry! We may be too late!"

Two white-faced girls rushed in upon General

Carden. His lips compressed as he read the message.

"This is Morris's work," he said. "Tell the messenger we will come at once. This is sad news; sad, sad news."

The hotel entrance was blocked by a mob when the Bishop carriage drew up. The blue helmets of police officers formed a line which marked the edge of a struggling crowd.

"One moment, sir!" ordered an officer holding his baton in front of General Carden. "Make way for the ambulance corps!"

The folding doors of the side entrance opened and four men slowly advanced bearing a stretcher. It contained a motionless mass covered with a white cloth. Jessie clung to her father's arm.

With a low cry Edith Hancock sprang forward and raised the cloth. She looked into the dead, staring eyes of Arthur Morris. The bearers paused while she gazed intently at the face, set by death in its last expression of rage. She nervously replaced the covering and turned to Jessie and her father.

"It's Arthur Morris! He's dead. Perhaps it's all a mistake about Mr. Blake. Find out, general; find out at once! We'll wait for you here."

General Carden returned and silently conducted Jessie and Edith to a room on the second floor. An attendant stood guard, but admitted them when General Carden whispered the names. It was a large apartment, furnished as a drawing-room.

A case of surgical instruments lay on the center table, but the room had no occupant. As they stood hesitatingly by the entrance, the door connecting an adjoining room opened and a tall man with red hair, sharp blue eyes and enormous hands entered. Jessie recognized Sam Rounds.

"Heou dew ye do!" he said softly, advancing with an awkward bow. "Sorry tew meet you in such a place, but the bitter goes with the sweet. Take a chair, General Carden. Jim's badly hurt, but he has a chance—so the doctors say. They're probing for the bullet now."

"Is there anything we can do?" asked Edith, her eyes clouded with agony and fear.

"No one but the doctors an'—an' God can pull him through," answered Sam. He looked at Edith with a puzzled expression on his homely face. "I don't rightly remember you, Miss, an' I don't ordinarily forget a face. The general I've seen, but of course he don't know me. My name's Rounds—Sam Rounds—once of Rocky Woods."

"This is my cousin, Edith Hancock," said Jessie, softly. "You have often heard of Alderman Rounds, papa."

In whispers the four talked of the tragedy. Sam had entered the hotel office just before the first shot was fired.

"It all happened so quick I couldn't do a thing," Sam explained. "The second shot fired by Morris just missed—some one else—some one Jim

was tryin' tew save—an' went through the top of Mr. Hawkins's hat. Morris was dead before he struck the floor. Jim is shot in almost the same place that Morris was five years ago or more. Morris lived then, an' so Jim has a chance now."

Jessie gently clasped Edith's hands and they looked into each other's eyes.

"He shall live for your sake, Edith dear," she whispered.

The door opened and a grave-faced surgeon entered the room.

"Miss Carden may see Mr. Blake for a few minutes," he said.

"May I see him then?" exclaimed Edith, laying her hand on the doctor's arm. "Please let me see him, doctor! I will be very quiet. Ask him, Jessie; ask Mr. Blake if I can see him if only for a minute."

"We shall see," said Dr. Harkness, quietly. "If you wish him to live, follow my orders without question. You may go in now, Miss Carden."

Sam Rounds opened the door and Jessie entered. Without once looking inside, Sam took a seat near General Carden.

In the dimly lighted room Jessie Carden saw two figures—one propped up with pillows so that only the head and arms showed against the white of linen. The curling, black locks fell back from the pale brow, and the handsome face seemed chiseled in purest marble.

As Jessie hesitated, awed by her surroundings, Blake's dark eyes sparkled with an anticipation beyond words to express, and his lips parted with a smile of ineffable joy.

Seated by him was a man, half shrouded in shadow. Before John Burt could restrain him Blake struggled to a sitting position.

"You are very good to come at this hour," the sufferer said. His voice, though faint, was clear, and had a thrill which went to the hearts of his listeners. "I spoke to you this evening of my dear friend from California. Miss Carden, allow me to present him. God bless you both!"

And thus they met, after the weary flight of years. Tenderly laying Blake back on the pillows, John clasped Jessie's hands and looked in her face.

"John!"

"Jessie!"

"Take her in your arms, John! Don't mind me. She loves—"

His voice died with a whisper, and, with a long-drawn sigh, he closed his eyes.

"He's dying! Call the doctor!" exclaimed Jessie, fear and pity chasing the love light from her eyes.

"Don't send for him, I'm all right now," pleaded Blake, opening his eyes. "Let me lie here and talk to you. The sight of you two is better than all the drugs or instruments. I have something to tell you—Miss Carden. I—"

"You promised not to talk," interrupted John Burt, with a look at Blake which had all the effect of a command. "I will tell Jessie about your little plot in which you thought to surprise me, but which has ended so unhappily for you. When Jim is strong and well, Jessie, we will let him make all the explanations he cares to, and perhaps we may forgive him for keeping us apart a whole week."

An expression of blank surprise, lightened with pleasure, came to Blake's face, and again he attempted to speak, but John checked him.

"As you may know, Jessie," John said, "Mr. Blake is the head of a firm which has been co-operating with your father in an important campaign. When you become better acquainted with Jim you will know that he is not only sentimental, but also fond of the dramatic. He knows a little of some of my secrets, and, when he found that you had returned from abroad, he conceived the idea that it would be a brilliant scheme to say nothing to me until the Morris conspiracy had been overthrown, and General Carden again came into possession of his own. The market climax came to-day, and, having paid to the general his share of the profits, Jim was ready for the finale. He intended to make a full confession to me this evening, and later hoped to make amends with you. Jim was waiting for me in the hotel lobby when Morris approached. Crazed with liquor, and enraged with the thought of his

losses, Morris fired a pistol shot which wounded Jim. But we're going to pull him through all right. He insists that we must forgive him, and we do, don't we, Jessie?"

"Of course we do," declared Jessie, with a puzzled glance into John Burt's eyes, and a smile at Blake. "But I'm afraid Mr. Blake is teasing us, John. Early this evening he hinted that he had been guilty of some great transgression, and I forgave him in advance, but I don't believe he's a bit sorry. I warn you, Mr. Blake, that I shall get even with you when you are better."

Blake looked from one to the other. As he realized the purport of John's truthful but evasive explanation, his eyes danced with joy. He clasped each of them by the hand.

"Let me say just a word!" he exclaimed, with a meaning glance at John. "To see you two together, and to hold your hands in mine after all that has happened, gives me new courage and renewed ambition. I want to live; I know I shall live. I ask your prayers, Miss Carden. If the prayers of a sinner are of any use, you and John shall be the happiest mortals on this earth."

The subdued sound of conversation came from the adjoining room. All of Blake's faculties seemed abnormally acute.

"Is not that Edith's voice?" he asked.

"She is in the other room," said Jessie.

"Let her come in," pleaded Blake. John made a gesture of disapproval.

"I should like to see her, but you know best, I suppose, John," he said. "I feel so much stronger than before you came, Miss Carden. You may tell the surgeons, John, that they can try it again any time they are ready. There's a piece of lead somewhere in here," said Blake to Jessie, with his old careless smile, as he laid his hand on his breast, "but we're going to have it out, and keep it for a relic, eh, John?"

Dr. Harkness entered the room and signaled to John that the interview must end. Blake gallantly raised Jessie's hand to his lips.

"Good-bye, until I'm better," he said, almost gaily. "You and John have saved my life. Tell Edith that my jailors would not let her in now; but that she must call when I'm free from them."

John escorted Jessie to the door, whispered a few words and returned to Blake's side.

"You're a god, John; a splendid, mendacious god!" said Blake, in a low tone. "You are the only man in the world worthy the love of such a woman."

Dr. Harkness approached and gave a satisfied glance at the wounded man.

"Go ahead, doctor, and do your worst," was the firm invitation. "Don't be afraid of hurting me. I survived a broken neck in California, and am not afraid of a lead pill in New York."

It is merciful to draw the curtain over the two hours which followed. At last a moment came when the grave face of Dr. Harkness was touched with a smile of professional pride, as he drew from an incision a flattened, jagged piece of lead. The patient glanced at it with pain-distorted eyes, and then sank into a sleep, the awakening from which meant so much in deciding for life or death.

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

THE END

PETER BURT stood by the gateway and shaded his eyes with his hand as he gazed down the road. A cool breeze from the ocean tempered the heat of a July afternoon. A few fleecy clouds floated lazily in the summer sky.

Two weeks before that day Peter Burt had received his first letter from John. It briefly and modestly recited the story of his struggles and of his success, and ended with an account of the tragedy which resulted in the death of Arthur Morris and the wounding of Blake. He informed his grandfather that Jim had a chance for life, and said that he should remain near him until the crisis decided his fate. Each following day a letter from John came to the old man, and on one occasion his heart was made glad by a loving note from Jessie Carden.

A mounted messenger from Hingham rested his horse by Peter Burt's gate and delivered a telegram which read:

> "Blake is declared out of immediate danger. You may expect four of us about noon on Wednesday."
>
> JOHN BURT.

The old-fashioned clock had sounded the midday hour, and Peter Burt looked beyond the turn of the road, where the yellow-brown of dust had dulled the green of foliage. Responding to the touch of a whip a spirited team of horses dashed ahead as they reached the summit of the hill.

Sam Rounds was driving, and a stranger to Peter Burt was beside him. John Burt and Jessie were in the rear seat.

"God is very good to us, John," said Peter Burt, as he took his grandson's hand and looked, through glad tears, into his face. He gave no look or word to the others, but fell on his knees in the dust of the road and offered a short and fervent prayer.

His stern old face grew tender as he arose and turned to Jessie Carden.

"An old man's blessing on your pretty head," he said, gently touching the folds of her hair with his huge palm. "You are very beautiful, my daughter, and it is God's will that you shall be happy. I am glad to see you again, Samuel."

He looked searchingly at the silent man in the front seat.

"I do not know you, sir," he said, extending his hand, "but any friend of my grandson's is welcome to such hospitality as a Burt can offer."

"Aye, aye, sir; Captain Burt! My name's Hawkins—John Hawkins, and I'm coming ashore," said that gentleman, stepping from the carriage.

Peter Burt grasped him by the shoulders and stared into his face.

"Jack Hawkins! Jack Hawkins, of the Segregansett! The dead has come to life, and God is good to his servant! Forgive me, Hawkins, as He has forgiven me!"

"Nothing to forgive, Captain Burt!" exclaimed John Hawkins, heartily, as he grasped the patriarch's hand. "You dropped me off the Segreganset in the right place and at the right time. Destiny orders all these things, and old destiny and I are chums. I'll tell you all about it, Captain Burt, when we have lots of time. I smell something cooking, and I'm as hungry as I was that time when the old whaler ran out of grub off the Juan Fernandez. I'm going into your cabin and prove that my appetite is as good as in the days when we tossed the seas around the world together. This is a fine cove for an old salt."

Linked arm in arm the old captain and his first mate entered the wide door of the Burt farmhouse.

Never had the great oaken table upheld such a dinner. Mrs. Jasper was temporarily supplanted by a chef from Boston. Rare old plate came, for the first time in John's recollection, from mysterious chests stored away in the attic. Those who surrounded the board never will forget the invocation offered by Peter Burt when he blessed the food. The shadows which darkened his life had all been lifted, and the austere cloud passed from his features as fog before a quickening gale.

There were so many things to tell that polite rules were ignored and all talked at once. The deep rumble of Hawkins's bass, the nasal twang of Sam Rounds's jokes, the music of Jessie Carden's

laughter, blended with the soothing clatter of dishes as deft waiters served the courses.

"I am glad to hear that Blake is better," said Peter Burt, in a lull of the conversation. "He is impulsive, but has a kind, generous heart. I presume he has the best of care."

"I should say he had," declared Hawkins, with a wink at Jessie Carden. "He has doctors who charge him a dollar for every beat of his pulse, and we have all helped take care of him. We were so persistent in our attentions that Dr. Harkness said he would be glad when we were out of the city. But there was one he couldn't drive away; eh, Miss Carden? Your charming cousin, Miss Hancock, sticks closer to Jim than a sick kitten to a pan of warm milk."

Hawkins poked Sam Rounds in the ribs and roared with a peal of laughter which amazed the sedate Mrs. Jasper.

"Edith is very considerate to remain in the city during this hot weather, and you are cruel, Mr. Hawkins, to make fun of her," protested Jessie, her face crimsoned with blushes. "Come to Edith's defense, John."

"She needs no defense," insisted Hawkins, tossing back his tawny locks, delighted with the chance to tease Edith's fair champion. "Jim is the one who needs defense. There he is, flat on his back, and Edith will capture him sure. He hasn't a chance in the world. I'll leave it to John, or bet-

ter yet to Sam, who is an expert in affairs of the heart."

"I reckon Jim ain't aimin' much to escape," grinned Sam. "I'd be shot up a whole lot if I thought such a pretty girl as Miss Edith would bring me flowers, an' jam, an' twenty-five cent see-gars, an' set and read me poetry outer books an' magazines. I never did have no kinder luck that there way, but I'm a young man yet, an' Ma Rounds hasn't give up hope that some day there'll be a Mrs. Samuel Lemuel Rounds. Tew my way of thinkin' Jim's erbout the luckiest chap that ever came outer Rocky Woods—exceptin', of course, John here; an' there's nothin' tew good fer John."

* * * * * * * * * *

Glistening in a new coat of paint the Standish bobbed at the landing when John helped Jessie on board. It was on such a day years before that they sailed out past the bow of the haughty Voltaire. They had accepted Sam Rounds's invitation to a clambake at Churchill's Grove, and Sam asked all his old friends and neighbors. For the first time in the memory of the living generation Peter Burt attended an outing. Under the giant pines he sat with John Hawkins and told and listened to tales of the sea.

Mrs. Rounds was in her element. The opportunity of hard work was again before her, and Sam could not restrain the good woman. Enforced ease had rounded her face and figure, and Sam's con-

tinued prosperity had chased away the haunting fear of poverty. But the love of work remained. She heaped fuel on the fires above the heated stones, set the tables, gave bread and butter to children whose appetites could not await the spreading of the feast, and did a hundred and one tasks which her sharp eyes detected.

"If you don't quit workin' I'll never let you come again," was Sam's threat.

"Never mind me, Samuel," said Mrs. Rounds with a happy smile. "This is the first real good time I've had since you made so much money. Some one has to do this work and why not me? Be a good boy, Samuel, and let me alone." And Sam reluctantly did so.

The Standish pointed her bow out towards Minot's Light, and picked her way between threatening rocks. The splendid crescent of the beach from Point Allerton to Cohasset spread out before them—the yellow of the sand, the deep green of the hills, the melting blue of the sky, the silver of the clouds, the moving splendor of the waves, the glint of sun on far-out ships, the soft caress of the breeze, the faint perfume of seaweed and cone, the idle flapping of the sail, the long slow heave of the sea—it was glorious to live and love.

Under the shadow of Black Reef John dropped the anchor and watched the line until it became taut as the incoming tide swept them near the rocks. Above his head he could see the spot where he had

knelt as a boy and listened to Peter Burt while he prayed to the God who ruled the storm. For some minutes no words were spoken.

"Do you remember the last time we were here, Jessie?" he asked. The little hand was over the side of the boat and the tide rippled through the slender fingers.

"Yes, John," without raising her eyes.

"Do you remember what I said to you that day, Jessie?"

"I—I think I do, John." It may have been the reflection of the sun, but a touch of crimson came to her cheeks. "It was a long time ago, John, and perhaps I've forgotten just what you said. Can you repeat it?"

An arm reached out and the little wet hand was firmly clasped.

"I told you that I loved you, Jessie," he said. The imprisoned hand made no attempt to escape. "I told you that that love was my inspiration; that no woman on earth should share it; that no matter whatever befell you—sunshine or rain, happiness or sorrow—that my ambition was to see you showered with all the blessings God can grant to a good woman; I said that if a day came when I had a right to ask your love in return that I should do so, making no claim on our old friendship. And then you said something, Jessie—do you remember what you said, darling?"

"I said that I wanted you to love me, but not

to speak of it again—until I said you could," said Jessie, lifting her laughing eyes. "You can say it again—if you wish to, John."

Two soft arms were around his neck and two sweet lips met his.

"You knew I would wait for you, John, didn't you?"

Shortly before their wedding-day John and Jessie galloped their horses along the beach. It brought back the old days. They paused to rest beneath the shade of trees at the base of Strawberry Hill.

"You told me an awful story, John," she said, looking into his eyes.

"When?" asked John, innocently.

"The night Mr. Blake was wounded," she replied, as her hand stole into his. "Don't deny it, John; I know all about it. Sam told me first, and then I made papa admit the truth. Every one in Wall Street knows that you are James Blake & Company, even if you have succeeded in keeping it out of the papers. Mr. Blake had nothing to do with restoring papa's fortune. You planned it, and have kept it a secret from me. Why, John?"

He made no answer.

"You may as well own up," Jessie continued. "I led Mr. Hawkins into the conservatory the other night, when you were talking with uncle Tom, and made him tell me all about it. At first he pretended he didn't wish to say anything, but I could see that he was proud to betray you. He told me

of the founding of your company, of your wonderful success, and of how you so manipulated that wretched L. & O. stock that it showered gold. Why did you keep this from me, John, and give all the credit to Mr. Blake?"

"Mr. Hawkins is a mad wag," laughed John, slipping his arm around the slender waist. "He is always teasing you. Come on, let's ride to Hull."

* * * * *

John Burt's modest mansion stands on the crest of the hill which slopes down to the old farmhouse. It commands a superb view of the crescent sweep of ocean beach, and also of the more quiet beauties of Hingham bay. Verdant terraces and winding paths and roads come to the edge of the yard surrounding the old homestead, but no gardener's hand has been permitted to touch the quaint surroundings, sacred to the ancestral founder of the house of Burt.

In the long summer days Jessie's children play about Peter Burt's knees. Nearly five score years have passed over his head. His shoulders are bent, and the voice falters at times, but his eyes preserve the spark of their wonted fires.

Watched and cared for by those who love him, he calmly awaits the coming of the reaper, into whose garner long since have been gathered the atoms of his generation.

A few miles away another mansion fronts the ocean. James Blake and his fair wife Edith have

been blessed with two children and with each other's love. A roguish boy bears the name of John, and a dainty little miss responds to the name of Jessie. James Blake is now in fact as well as in name the head of the great firm so conspicuous in this narrative. In a thousand ways he has merited the confidence reposed in him by John Burt. Generous as yet, almost to a fault, he has acquired with responsibility that breadth of view and poise of judgment which found its highest expression in the man who made his success possible.

Retiring from active business when most men are making a start, John Burt has devoted his time to the study of statesmanship in its purest sense. Political honors have crowded upon him. There are thousands who share the confident faith of his loving wife that the highest place in the gift of the people shall some day crown his career.

There are frequent reunions in the old farmhouse or on the spacious lawns surrounding John Burt's residence. Once a year Sam Rounds superintends a clambake, and John Hawkins always manages to be present. To the latter's inquiries concerning the future Mrs. Rounds, Sam turns a grinning, untroubled face.

"No man in Rocky Woods is a bachelor until he is way past sixty," Sam declares, "an' I'm spry yet as a colt in clover. Sometimes Ma Rounds is a bit doubtful erbout my matrimonial chances, but I has hopes; I still has hopes. Edith, may I help

you to some more of them clams? Jessie, please pass young Master Burt's plate; it's empty already. How that boy grows! He's coming up like sparrow-grass after a rain."

Mrs. Rounds bustles around, her eyes bright with the joy of being busy.

"You set down, Ma Rounds," commands Sam in a hopeless tone. "You set right down and let us young folks wait on the table. I can't break her of workin', John; I swan, I just can't do nothin' with her. Well," raising a glass of sparkling cider, "here's God bless all good people, an' happy days tew all of ye!"

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